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ABSTRACT

Addressed is the need in social work education to identify the skills required for effective practice, to develop instruments to measure these skills, and to design an approach to teach them effectively. In the first chapter, "Identifying the Worker Helping Skills," 27 communication, relationship, and problem-solving skills are described. The skills are presented using time as an organizing principle (the preliminary, beginning, work, and ending transition phases). The second chapter, "Measuring Helping Skills Using Client Feedback," describes the development of a consumer questionnaire in which clients provide their perceptions of their workers' skill levels. The third chapter, "Measuring Helping Skills Using An Observation System," discusses a second procedure designed to measure social work practice skill. The instrument is an observation system in which trained raters are able to categorize observed client and worker activity and translate these observations into profiles of interaction. The final chapter, "Teaching Practice Skills," addresses one aspect of teaching social work practice skills. Appendices include: social worker behavior questionnaire; observation social work; theory, practice, and research; social worker behavior questionnaire (individual item analysis); and the mediating theory. A bibliography is provided. (LC)

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Identifying, Measuring, And Teaching Helping Skills

by
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FOREWORD

The publication of this volume by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education represents another effort toward the goal of enhancing the quality of social work education and practice in both countries.

Lawrence Shulman has made a valuable contribution in his study and conceptualization of the critical components of professional competency in interactional skills with clients and systems' representatives.

The section on strategies for teaching should have significant value to all engaged in the important task of education for the profession of social work. Both the practice and academic sectors which share in this responsibility will find this work an important resource.

The two national organizations were pleased to have the opportunity to engage in such a productive joint endeavor. Both look forward to future cooperative projects which can be of mutual benefit to both constituencies.

CSWE and CASSW wish to thank the Welfare Grants Directorate, Health and Welfare Canada, for their support of this joint project.

M. DENNIS KIMBERLEY
Executive Director
Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work

ARTHUR J. KATZ
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Council on Social Work Education

PREFACE

This book attempts to address the need in social work education to identify the skills required for effective practice, to develop instruments to measure these skills, and to design an approach to teach them effectively.

In the first chapter, 27 communication, relationship, and problem-solving skills are described and briefly illustrated. Although these skills are drawn directly from the practice theory developed by William Schwartz — often described as "an interactional approach" — most, if not all, are appropriate for the implementation of other practice frameworks. The list is not inclusive, and one easily could make an argument for the importance of other key skills (e.g., diagnostic skills). The skills are presented using time as an organizing principle (the preliminary, beginning, work, and ending/transition phases). The underlying assumptions associated with each skill are summarized briefly. The reader is referred to other publications for an elaboration of the practice theory presented.

The second chapter describes the development of a consumer questionnaire in which clients provide their perceptions of their workers' skill levels. The research project for which this questionnaire was developed is described in some detail, as are the efforts to determine the questionnaire's reliability and validity. The reader also is provided with a number of interesting practice profiles describing the skill levels observed for the "average" worker in the study, for trained and untrained workers in the sample, for workers with more experience and those with less, and for workers with specific levels of training. The results reported in this chapter are described as tentative and the reader is cautioned to recognize the limitations of the study design (e.g., all the social workers were involved in child welfare agencies, and the instruments are still considered to be in an "embryonic" stage). In addition, the normative skill development pattern for students in their first year of social work training is described.

The third chapter discusses a second procedure designed to measure social work practice skill. The instrument is an observation system in which trained raters are able to categorize observed client and worker activity and translate these observations into profiles of interaction. The observation system was developed for individual work, groupwork, and work with families. The findings of a study in which 120 hours of individual and group practice were videotaped and analyzed are included as an illustration of how such a system could be used to obtain information on a single session, as well as on groups of sessions. Once again, the limitations of this embryonic observation system are described and the reader is cautioned to view the findings as an illustration of how a category observation system might be useful as both a training and a research device.

In the final chapter, I address one aspect of teaching social work practice skills. My interest is focussed on the way a practice teacher illustrates these same communication, relationship, and problem-solving skills when conducting a class. Process recording excerpts from my own teaching are used to illustrate the presence or absence of these skills in classroom teaching. This chapter is based on the assumption that modelling practice skills in a classroom context is an important way to teach these skills. As students observe their practice teachers, they learn a great deal about their instructors' views of the helping process. In presenting this chapter I acknowledge that modelling practice skills is just one aspect of teaching them; however, I believe it is important.

Thus the reader will find that the 27 skills identified in Chapter One are measured through a client questionnaire in Chapter Two and a category observation system in Chapter Three, and are modelled by the classroom instructor in Chapter Four. It is important to underline the fact that I consider the research effort described in this book to be an early effort to move into the empirical examination of our practice, an effort that will become increasingly sophisticated as we strengthen our spirit of investigation in this area and our tools of examination.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of this book and the research project described in connection with the instrument development were funded by the Welfare Grants Directorate of Health and Welfare Canada (Grant # 2554-23-8). J. Evariste Thériault of this department was particularly helpful in providing advice and encouragement. The views expressed within are solely the responsibility of the author.

It is important to recognize the substantial contribution to my work of my colleague, Dr. William Schwartz. His practice framework in both published and unpublished works have guided me in my study of method. The interpretations are of course solely my responsibility.

The research project was conducted over a four-year period with support and contributions of an enthusiastic project team. Members of the research staff included Manon Nguyen, Mona Propst, Sheila Baslow, Frema Engel, Nilda Hillgartner, Bill Hunt, Robert Lightman, Elsie Shriar, and Reisa Schneider. Students who participated included Jeff Jones, Brenda Yarcag, and MaryAnn Carbone. William Hillgartner served as a consultant on video and computer programming questions.

A number of colleagues at both McGill University and the University of British Columbia provided encouragement and advice along the way. These included Ted Shiner, Henry Maas, John Crane, and Kloh-Ann Amacher. A number of helpful suggestions also were provided by one of the manuscript reviewers, George Masalowsky of the University of Saskatchewan. I also would like to acknowledge Wallace Jalinske of the Council on Social Work Education staff for his help in translating my manuscript into its final published form.

In addition, Sheila Shulman and Tirthanker Bose helped with the editing and April Hamilton and Alix Hirabayashi typed the manuscript. I also must note the help of the staff and clients of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and the Children's Service Centre of Montreal who participated in the project. Finally, my thanks to my own students over the past ten years who have taught me a great deal about teaching.

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1

IDENTIFYING THE WORKER HELPING SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

There is, among educators in the helping professions, a growing interest in the development of educational programs directed at competency. Method has become central to our discussions. This change reflects a new consensus that cuts across theoretical boundaries. The agreement centers on the understanding that no matter which practice theory guides a professional's actions, competency in interactional skills with clients and systems' representatives is necessary to implement that theory. Graduates of educational programs are judged not by how well they can explain their function, but rather by how well they apply their skills and to what extent they function effectively.

This movement toward skill-based programs leads to the three major areas of work with which this book is concerned. The first is the *necessity for identifying specific helping skills.* What is it that we expect trained workers to be able to do with clients and others in the client's system? These skills must be analyzed and described clearly so that they can be taught. Mid-range models of the helping process must be constructed to provide the connecting links between general frameworks and the practice they hope to explain. These models and the skills included in them must be generalized enough to fit a range of frameworks. This is particularly important since the social work field is far from ready to adopt a single view — in fact, many would question whether it ever should. Finally, a skill model needs to deal with the central core of the helping process, that is, with what is often termed "generic practice." This would be a model with applications for work with individuals, groups, families, and communities. If these requirements can be met, even partially, then the possibility of developing some consensus on the minimum skill requirements for professional graduates can be enhanced.

The second major area of work is our *ability to measure the performance of these skills.* Performance measurement is important for two reasons. It provides the possibility for integrating a feedback system into an educational program, which will provide students and faculty with an accurate assessment of skill-development progress. Such a system helps to identify areas of strength and weakness and systematically orders a student's learning agenda. The second function of performance measurements is to determine when students have reached the minimum expected skill level for entering a profession. Efforts on the part of professional associations and groups to determine what that skill level is often have failed to go beyond developing instruments that test the ability of professionals to describe what they would do, or to analyze problem situations. While these skills may be helpful, they fail to measure the interaction in interviews done by professionals.

Instruments developed for measuring skills must be applicable to a range of settings. Evidence of reliability and validity is required so that results can be evaluated in the context of both the strength and limitations of the instruments. In addition, they must be practical in the sense that they can be used on a routine basis and be built into the ongoing process of an educational program.

The third area of work is *to develop strategies for teaching.* Classroom and field assignments, exercises, and teaching sessions need to incorporate systematic attention to skill development. Critical to this process is the ability of the instructor to model the helping skills being taught. In many ways the teaching process has elements common to all helping processes. Although the purpose of a class and the function of a teacher introduce variant elements, some of the dynamics are strikingly similar. Thus practice instructors who try to help a class develop empathic skills function best when they demonstrate their own capacity for empathy with the students. The classroom and field instruction encounters become, in some ways, a model of what the instructor believes about the helping process in action.

Keeping these requirements in mind, I have attempted in this book to explore various aspects of identifying, measuring, and teaching the helping skills. This first chapter identifies 27 specific worker helping skills (see Table 1.1). The underlying assumptions (knowledge) related to each skill are discussed. The skills are organized into a mid-range model of the helping process and are examined against the backdrop of time.

The skills are developed from a framework for practice formulated by William Schwartz.[1] While the development of the present model has been guided by his approach, all of the skills identified here could fit quite comfortably within other frameworks. The author believes that some agreement could be reached by most educators and theorists on the importance of these skills, while all could reserve the right to explain the helping process with their own theoretical constructs. Such diversity at this stage in the growth of our profession is necessary.

The second chapter describes a questionnaire developed in connection with a four-year study of the helping process. This instrument is designed to obtain data on the use of worker skill, employing

TABLE 1.1
The Worker Helping Skills

1. Clarifying Purpose
2. Clarifying Role
3. Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose
4. Displaying Belief in the Potential of the Work
5. Reaching for Between Session Data
6. Moving from the General to the Specific
7. Reaching Inside of Silences
8. Understanding the Client's Feelings
9. Putting the Client's Feelings into Words
10. Connecting Feelings to Work
11. Displaying Feelings Openly
12. Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings
13. Supporting the Client's Strength
14. Partializing the Client's Concerns
15. Holding to Focus
16. Checking for Artificial Consensus
17. Pointing Out the Illusion of Work
18. Supporting the Client in Taboo Areas
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles to Work
20. Dealing with the Authority Theme
21. Providing Data
22. Viewing Systems People in New Ways
23. Contacting Systems People Directly
24. Pointing Out the Endings
25. Sharing Ending Feelings
26. Asking for a Review of the Learning
27. Reaching for Ending Feelings

client feedback. The results of two years of reliability and validity testing are described. In addition, practice profiles of 118 social workers in two child welfare settings are discussed. The profile of the average worker in the study is used to illustrate a model of normative skill development based on observations of student learning patterns. Tentative findings from the study on the impact of the use of these skills on relationship building and helpfulness to clients also are shared.

The third chapter describes a second instrument for measuring the use of worker skill, employing interaction analysis techniques. A category observation system for rating audiotapes or videotapes of individual, group, or family practice was developed in connection with the research project. Procedures for training raters are described, as are the results of the analysis of 120 hours of individual and group practice. The system is presented as a tool for teaching skills of practice analysis.

The fourth chapter deals with teaching skills. The division of labor between classroom and field teaching is discussed and a model for organizing practice teaching presented. The process of teaching also is examined, as are illustrations designed to highlight the way in which an instructor can model the skills in action.

This book is unified by the common thread of the 27 worker helping skills described in this chapter and then translated into questionnaire items in Chapter Two. The research project described there examined the impact of the use of these skills on outcome measures, including client perceptions of their worker's helpfulness. These same skills are grouped into categories in Chapter Three to form a Category Observation System for the analysis of audiotapes or videotapes of practice. A number of the skills reappear in Chapter Four, this time as they are used by a classroom teacher of practice who was attempting to model the skills as he implemented his teaching function.

In the balance of this chapter, the 27 worker helping skills are identified and then organized into a structure that represents a model of the helping process. It is an effort to construct a simplified description of a very complex process. As such, it leaves out many of the variant elements that contribute to the interaction.[2] For example, early helping interviews with resistant clients may look quite different than with clients who seek help. I believe that the basic dynamics described are similar in both cases; however, the unique nature of each client and the differences in agency service will introduce variations on the central themes.

In developing his practice framework, Schwartz identified underlying assumptions about human behavior (knowledge) related to the phases of work (preliminary, beginning, work, and transitions and endings). He then identified specific worker objectives based on these assumptions (valued outcomes). To complete his framework, he then described specific worker behaviors (skills) designed to achieve the valued outcomes.[3]

The choice of skills to be examined in this chapter and the underlying assumptions about the dynamics of helping interactions are rooted in Schwartz's practice framework. It is possible, however, for many of the skills discussed and the model of interaction described to fit comfortably into other theoretical frameworks. A good example of this is the consensus in the field of most theoretical positions about the importance of the initial stage of work and the need for some form of worker contracting skill. The specifics of the contracting may be heavily affected by the framework guiding the practitioner, but the need for clarity of purpose is common. This concern about task can be found in the work of Studt, for example, who defined a task as "specified work performed over time, for a purpose beyond satisfaction in the doing itself, and measured by requirements outside the person doing the work."[4]

Bartlett also focused on task, using a life-task, developmental model as a framework. Reid and Epstein provided another example.[5]

Garvin has described three major modalities for conceptualizing practice: the task model, the systems model, and the social psychological model.[6] He identified a number of common factors that cut across theoretical boundaries. Turner addressed the teaching implications of the growing number of thought systems influencing practice. He argued for an eclectic stance that views theories as interlocking:

> But we know that it is possible to view man differently and still act responsibly.
>
> We know we have been influenced, sometimes more than we have acknowledged, by a range of thought systems. We know that if we pause to consider, we can find in each of the prevalent systems, ideas that can help us meet particular facets of our general caseloads.[7]

Middle-range models may serve to emphasize the common factors and the interlocking aspects of theoretical approaches. Thus it is my hope that the constructs discussed in this book might be employed in connection with a range of frameworks.

Finally, I believe that a sense of professional function is a critical factor in guiding helping professionals as they interact with clients. The mediating functional assignment, as described by Schwartz, has been most helpful to me in explaining my practice and in guiding my model building, teaching, and research efforts.[8] However, it is important to emphasize that no one framework for practice is so well-developed as to provide all the answers. A framework provides a tool for our work. However, it loses its value if it does not remain tentative and open to change.

To help the reader place the helping skills in context, a brief summary is given here of the central ideas in the approach, introducing the discussion of specific skills.

THE MEDIATING FUNCTION

Schwartz views the relationship between the individual and his or her nurturing group as essentially symbiotic, "each needing the other for its own life and growth, and each reaching out to the other with all of the strength it can command at a given moment."[9] This relationship is implemented in a number of specific engagements. For example, it may be seen between the client and the agency system, peer-group, family, or work setting.

Schwartz recognized the complexity of this process and the fact that the individual's sense of self-interest is not always identified with his or her significant others. Powerful defenses may be thrown up, both by clients and the systems they deal with, to block their mutual need. Thus a parent having trouble raising his or her children might turn away from the agency's offer of service out of fear, resentment, or defensiveness. In turn, the agency, through its policies and procedures, might subtly turn the aggressive and hostile parent away from both the service and his or her children. The mutual stake of agency and client in each other is still there, but it might be obscured by a powerful obstacle.

In another example, the worker dealing with a family might have to look deeply to see the connection between the parents' demand for regulation of their teenager's behavior and the youngster's need for structure, caring, and protection. In turn, the teenager's growing sense of independence will be connected subtly with the parents' aspirations for their teenager's maturation. Once again, the common ground might be partial, temporary, and elusive, but it is present and represents the most important force for change and growth within the family.

In a third example, a foster child's conflict with the school teacher might be presented as an insurmountable obstacle to continued education. The student's frustrations and self-doubts might emerge in a disguised form, perhaps as an apathetic reaction. The student declares that he or she doesn't care about flunking out of school — hiding hurt pride — when he or she really does care about and need the education. The school for its part, might turn away from the difficult student, set up barriers against his or her continuation, accept his or her apathy at face value, and cease to work at reaching out to the student effectively. Once again, an obstacle might obscure a potentially powerful force for change.

For clients, the obstacles with the agency, the family, the school, or whatever system they are relating to, seem much greater than the mutual attraction. It is precisely because of these blocks that Schwartz proposed the general functional assignment for the worker of mediating the engagement between individuals and their significant systems. The worker carries this unique function of constantly trying to keep in view and help reveal to clients and systems their areas of common ground. As part of their task, workers point out when obstacles have emerged to obscure the essential connection.

Thus the client is not viewed as someone who is "broken" who needs to be "fixed" by a knowing worker, even if the client asks to be fixed. In turn, the system is not viewed as a stereotype that is to be treated as the "enemy." Instead, the worker using this approach always looks for that part of the client and the system, however small, that represents strength and a willingness to reach out to choose growth.

For example, in the illustration of the teenager who is cut off from the school experience, the worker would look for that part of the communication which is hidden from view — the hurt and disappointment. The worker should reach for it and encourage the client to clarify his or her communications to the teacher and principal. In turn, the worker would utilize that part of the school's attitude toward "difficult" students that takes pride in helping students through. Could the school make clearer its aspirations for the youngster? Could the staff and the student understand some of the barriers that have been raised to block real communication, which has led both sides to see only that part of the ambivalence which seems negative? Often when real talk can be initiated, it releases potent forces for change inherent in the strength of the client and the system.

Included in this mediating function would be the process of advocating for clients when they are faced with complex, often unmoving bureaucratic systems (e.g., welfare or housing). This advocacy, however, would not take the form of a rejection of the system, but rather would arise out of a belief in the system's ability to provide a real service to the client. Demands would be made on the system by a worker who understood the complexities of large organizations, their ambivalence toward the clients they serve, and the specific dilemmas that system representatives often face. The worker would try to improve the agency's (or other systems') service to the client precisely because he or she identifies with the services in spite of any imperfections.[10]

This brief, general description is an oversimplification of the general framework. Moreover, it has not addressed itself to the many dilemmas that face workers in their attempts to be helpful. For example, how can a worker reach out to help a parent who is abusing a child if the worker simultaneously carries the functional responsibility of taking abused children into agency care? This would be a variant element in the process that would have to be accounted for.

THE PHASES OF WORK

The complexity of the helping process led Schwartz to suggest that we examine its dynamics and the skills of the worker against the backdrop of time.[11] The phases of work were described as *tuning in, beginning, work,* and *ending and transition.* These are explained here briefly and then elaborated in more detail in the next section.

In the *tuning in phase,* workers attempt to develop a preliminary empathy prior to meeting clients. They try to alert themselves to the potential themes of concern and the reactions to the agency and to the workers, all of which *may* form part of the clients' initial responses. The tuning in is tentative because workers recognize that each client is unique, and thus they must be prepared for totally unexpected responses.

The purpose of tuning in is to prepare the worker for indirect cues from the client about concerns and issues that may be hard to discuss openly. The worker can be more sensitive and will have a better chance of "reading" the client's indirect messages if he or she is prepared.

In the *beginning phase,* the major task is clarifying the worker's purpose and role. This includes the worker's efforts in the first sessions to explain the agency service and to develop a sense of the "working contract," an agreement between the worker and the client that connects agency service and the client's sense of felt need. The assumption is that until the client is clear about the purpose of the work and senses in that purpose a chance to deal with his or her own sense of urgency, the interaction between the worker and client will be marked by prolonged periods of indirect testing.

In addition, the importance of this phase rests on the assumption that clients must be involved actively in working on that part of *their* agenda that relates to the service of the agency. The client is not an object to be acted on by the worker, but an individual with rights, concerns, and some degree of strength. In contracting, the worker attempts to reach for that part of the client which represents movement toward the agency service.

The *work phase* consists of the worker and client, each with a sense of function and task, working together on the areas of concern identified in the contract (e.g., improving housing, getting a job, or learning how to handle an acting-out youngster). In this phase of work, a premium is placed on the worker's ability to determine the client's themes of concern, to help the client elaborate on the theme, to keep the discussion meaningful by dealing with the associated affect, and to represent a continuous demand for work to the client.

The *ending and transition phase* deals with the special dynamics related to those sessions with the client near the time when the relationship is coming to an end. The last meetings with a foster adolescent who is moving out of the care of the agency is an example.

The skills involved in this phase relate to the difficult task of helping clients sum up their learning and share their honest feelings about the ending (anger, sadness, ambivalence, etc.). The sharing of the worker's own feelings also are central to this phase of work, as the worker attempts to help the client use the sense of urgency usually associated with endings (the "door knob therapy phenomenon") to produce effective work.

While I have reviewed briefly this framework of time as it applies to the entire course of a relationship, it also can be useful for the analysis of each session. Every helping encounter has a beginning phase, a work phase, and an ending and transition phase. The ending of a session is not permanent and the work is designed to effect a transition to the next session.

The next section of this chapter explores each of these phases in detail, identifying the related skills. The discussion of the worker's tasks is based on a number of general propositions about human behavior in the helping situation. These propositions represent assumptions about how people in general, and clients specifically, tend to behave under certain conditions. Using these assumptions about human behavior, Schwartz posed a number of specific outcomes which the worker may hope to achieve.[12] The worker skills identified are those behaviors designed to achieve the desired outcomes based on the underlying assumptions about behavior.

A list of these propositions about behavior has been developed for each phase. Working with two student research assistants, the author reworded the propositions into testable statements. Charts summarizing the underlying assumptions for the tuning in, beginning, and ending and transition phases are included in Appendix E.

Although four phases of work have been identified, the following discussion of the specific skills and the related questionnaire items skips the preliminary tuning in phase and starts with the beginning phase. The rationale for this is that the questionnaire dealt with client perceptions of worker behavior so that clients could report only on worker skill demonstrated in actual contacts. One might expect the effects of skillful preparatory work to be demonstrated in each of the three phases. For example, a worker who was tuned in to the client's feelings might be better able to articulate those feelings, a skill described as "putting the client's feelings into words" (see item nine, p. 17).

THE BEGINNING PHASE

Schwartz's discussion of the beginning phase starts with a number of key assumptions about the helping process.[13] First sessions with an agency worker would tend to amplify and aggravate a number of ambivalent feelings in clients. There would be fear of inadequacy, of incompetency, and of new demands placed on the client by the worker. At the same time, there could be some hope of satisfaction, achievement, recognition, and realization of one's potential. Fear of new demands would aggravate feelings of dependency and a natural fear of authority.

The stresses related to a new encounter tend to be heightened by a reluctance on the part of workers and clients not to make direct statements of mutual demand and expectation. Direct statements often are thought of by workers and clients as embarrassing and therefore are avoided. The result of this avoidance, however, will be ambiguity on the part of the client as to the purpose of the meetings and the specific role of the worker.

This ambiguity often will lead to prolonged periods of testing. The client will have difficulty in choosing the appropriate responses and will tend to use more indirect communications' methods. Lack of clarity about the worker's role will only heighten the client's fear and anxiety about the nature of the agency's demands and expectations, and specifically, about the worker's power.

In child welfare work, for example, work with adolescent foster children often is marked by long periods of silence, monosyllabic responses to worker questions, and a general feeling on the part of the worker that the client simply "doesn't want to talk." Close analysis of the process might reveal that the worker, in attempting to establish a relationship, has neglected to spell out in concrete terms the kinds of help that can be offered. Perhaps mention of the difficulties facing foster children has been avoided, or if a statement of purpose was made early in the proceedings, it may have consisted of jargon that has left the youngster unclear about the purpose of the session. It is not difficult to imagine that the hidden concern of the foster child might be that the worker is getting ready to move him or her to a new home and simply is not being honest.

A clear statement of purpose, on the other hand, serves to define and limit the demands and expectations on the client. The client is free to select responses and to involve himself or herself in the work. If the worker can use the first sessions for contracting work — in which a key element is the identification of the common ground between the client's sense of need and the agency's services offered by the worker — then the worker has a better chance of success. Clarification of the worker's role in the proceedings and some agreement between the worker and the client as to their mutual views of the means of helping also can lead to more productive work.

The four worker skills related to the beginning phase are:

1. Clarifying Purpose — A simple, nonjargonized statement by the worker of the general area of work. For example: "You know your wife has signed forms to place your children under the care of the agency. I wanted to meet with you to have you sign the agreements, but before that, to discuss what this means for you and your children. I know it can be an upsetting time and I thought you might also have things on your mind you want to discuss."
2. Clarifying Role — A statement designed to give the client a beginning idea of how a social worker might help. For example, group context: "You all have many concerns in common. My job will be to help you share them with each other and to help each other come up with ideas that may help. I'll share my ideas as well."
3. Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose — A request for the client's response to the opening statements and the client's sense of the specific work. For example: "What are some of the things concerning you right now?"
4. Displaying Belief in the Potential of the Work — Statements designed to convey to the client the idea that there is always a next step. For example: "Things may seem impossible right now, but if we start to tackle them one at a time, I think you can get somewhere."

THE WORK PHASE

After preliminary agreement has been reached on the nature of the work, the interviews move into the work phase. The agreements of the beginning phase are tentative and open to change as the relationship with the client deepens. Often, "near problems" (less-serious concerns used to test the worker) raised in the first interviews will evolve into more serious and difficult-to-discuss issues. However, the worker will respect the contract as agreed on and will respond to the client's sense of urgency.

The work phase is extremely complex. Each session can be viewed through the framework of time phases — beginning, work, and ending and transition. As an aid to understanding the dynamics of the interview, I have used the idea of skill factors. A skill factor consists of a set of behaviors that have a common purpose in the helping interview. The factors are the following: (1) sessional contracting, (2) elaborating the client's concerns, (3) empathic response, (4) sharing the worker's feelings, (5) the demand for work, (6) identifying obstacles, (7) providing data, and (8) dealing with systems.[14]

Sessional Contracting

I have already discussed four skills that relate to the general contracting process of the first sessions. Schwartz pointed out that contracting also takes place on a sessional basis, at the beginning of each interview. The major question for the worker at the start of the session is: What is the client working on today?

A major proposition underlying the importance of sessional contracting relates to the idea that clients can only invest themselves in work if they can perceive its usefulness in terms of their own sense of need. This sense of need — the client's urgent theme of concern — may only be partially felt, shifting and changing from situation to situation and moment to moment. Even if the worker and client have agreed at the end of the preceding session to focus on a specific issue, the worker has to be open to the idea that the client has many life experiences between sessions and that these may shift his or her priorities.

The worker also must recognize that the client often will use indirect means of communicating concerns in difficult and sensitive areas. A comment that "everything went beautifully this week," may be a first offering, a presentation by the client of a theme of concern, which in reality may represent the opposite feeling. An apparently unconnected story may contain hints of a powerful theme of concern blocked from easy presentation by a taboo (e.g., sex or dependency). Given the problems of communicating in the beginning phase of a session, a worker needs to concentrate most of the first efforts on sessional contracting.

This may be impossible if the worker either assumes that the agenda agreed on at an earlier session is still operable or that the first theme raised by the client represents the contracting for the day. In addition, if workers begin the session with their own agendas (hidden or open) and attempt to direct their clients to the workers' sense of urgency, they invite the possibility of an "illusion of work," with the client pretending an investment while the real investment of energy is locked into private concerns.

The power of sessional contracting was brought home to our research group through a subdesign in which we examined over 60 individual and group sessions videotaped for the project. A major practice problem in evidence was that workers sometimes began the interview with their own agendas. Clients would make indirect offers that often were refused by the workers. Clients would then pretend to be involved while presenting verbal and nonverbal clues which indicated that they really were not (examples of such clues included repeated questioning of what the worker meant, flat affect, restlessness, or direct or indirect anger). In one interview, a client was alone in a room with a worker and a camera and knew that the tapes would be viewed by researchers at the university. After repeated efforts to get her message across to the worker, who was intent on her own agenda, the client turned to the camera and said, "Do you understand?"

One of the skills important to sessional contracting involves the worker's efforts to provide an opportunity at the beginning of each session for the client to make a first offering.

5. Reaching for Between Session Data — For example: "Before we begin on that housing question, I wonder if there was anything else that has come up this week?"

Sessional contracting requires an intense effort at listening, as well as a number of behaviors listed under the next behavioral factor. There are times when a worker must contribute items to the agenda (for example, a change in agency policy affecting the client). This can be done openly, with the client participating in the discussion of the order of work. Sometimes simply acknowledging the client's concerns will allow a client to invest effort in other areas, with the knowledge that his or her own themes will not be ignored.

Elaborating the Client's Concerns

As the session unfolds, the worker concentrates on helping the client tell the story. The first offerings, often vague and indirect, have to be encouraged. The worker's questions focus on the clarification of the themes raised by the client. A common error observed on the taped sessions involved moving too quickly into a response or an "answer," when the client had only begun to explain his or her concern.

For example, if a client described difficulty in taking an important step in life, the worker would inquire about the source of the client's ambivalence. Efforts to provide data to help the client make a move, without first understanding the client's real dilemma, can easily lead to an artificial agreement and no action.

One of the skills involved in the elaborating factor involves taking the client's first offering that is presented in a general manner and helping him or her move to a more specific statement of the problem.

6. Moving from the General to the Specific — For example: Client: "You know kids can be tough to raise." Worker: "Did Mary give you a hard time again this week?" Client: "She came home late and gave me lip." Worker: "What did she say?"

Another elaborating skill is related to how the worker handles silence in the interview. Silences are viewed as critical moments of communication. Whenever a silence occurs, important events are taking place. The worker's problem is to understand the meaning of this. Central to the elaborating skill would be the worker's ability to understand and react to silence. Silences tend to be difficult for workers to handle. They often interpret them as negative feedback, or a sign that they must take command of the interview.

In our analysis of the practice videotapes we discovered that silences were followed most often by the worker changing the subject away from the client's theme of concern. An alternative reaction would involve containment — that is, the worker responded to silence with silence. When containment is brief it can be helpful in allowing a meaningful pause or encouraging a client to continue. When it is long, however, it can be experienced by the client as what Schwartz has called, a "battle of wills."[15] What was initially a silence with any number of important messages has now changed to: "If you won't speak, neither will I."

7. Reaching Inside of Silences — Efforts to explore the meaning of the silence. For example: "What are you thinking about?" Or, in response to nonverbal cues, "It seems to be hitting you hard; is it too tough to to talk about?" Or, "You seem distracted; did I lose you just then?"

In this description of the work phase skills it becomes apparent to me that in my efforts to clarify the helping process I have had to oversimplify. I began with sessional contracting and followed with the elaborating skills in which the worker helps the client tell his or her story. It is a logical order, but interviews do not proceed logically. A worker may listen well in the beginning phase of the interview and still find that the real theme of concern does not emerge until midpoint or even at the very end, in the "door knob phenomenon." Clients have a part to play in the proceedings. Their contribution, their willingness to risk themselves, to take help, and understand and articulate their concerns all have their impact.

In addition, these behavior factors are not mutually exclusive. For example, elaborating skills help clarify the sessional contract. The empathic skills described in the next section also serve to encourage elaboration. I recognize the limitations in a model used for descriptive purposes. However, a clear sense of the overall structure of the helping process is essential to an understanding of its many subtle variations.

Empathic Response

As clients tell their stories, workers can use a number of skills designed to keep the discussion "real" by having the client invest it with feelings.[16] Clients often will share difficult experiences while seeming to deny the associated affect. For some, it may be so painful that they have suppressed the emotion. Their own feelings are not clear, even to themselves. For others, the emotions may seem strange or unacceptable, and they are fearful of admitting them to the worker.

Whatever the reason, the affect is there and it will exert a powerful force on the client until it can be acknowledged and dealt with. Sharing feelings with the worker can release important sources of energy for the client that will help in the work. The client also can learn how emotions directly relate to actions. He or she can develop skills in understanding the sensations felt in accepting them and sharing them with those who matter.

For example, the father whose concept of manhood prevents him from admitting his anguish over an acting out daughter's behavior may discover that he has warmth and caring and that they have been covered up by anger. This expression of feeling may open up channels between the two. Learning to face real feelings, to understand them and not judge oneself harshly, and then to be able to communicate them in an adult manner is central to the work phase. The father begins to perceive an alternate model for parenthood and new and more functional ideas about what makes a man.

As workers allow themselves to get closer to clients, to experience clients as they really are and not as they present themselves, they give clients permission to be themselves. The acceptance and understanding of client emotions and the worker's willingness to share them by experiencing them, frees clients to drop defenses and allows the worker more access to the real person. The worker also serves as a role model — that of an adult with empathic ability.

It is important to clarify one point before proceeding. This process can be handled superficially, in a ritualistic manner, thus negating its true meaning. The worker who routinely asks a client how he or she feels, while not really being open to the feeling, may be perceived as not really caring. True empathy involves stepping into the client's shoes and summoning an affective response that comes as close as possible to the experience of the other. In this sense, the worker's empathy represents a gift to the client, since the emotions are shared.

Because of the difficulty involved in this skill, workers must develop their ability to empathize. The capacity for empathy appears to grow with experience. Workers will learn more about life from each client if they are open to this learning. This will aid them in better understanding the next client. They also will learn more about their own feelings, their true reactions to the plight of others. Awareness of the sensitive areas in their own emotional armor will help them avoid denying and intellectualizing difficult emotions as they are presented. They will allow clients to share more difficult emotions as they become comfortable with their impact. This will be true particularly with negative affect, both theirs and the clients', which is a part of any helping relationship.

The behaviors described in this chapter can be viewed as different levels of sophistication in the empathy skills.

8. **Understanding the Client's Feelings — Verbal and nonverbal expressions by the worker that indicate his or her immediate experiencing of the client's emotions. For example: Client: "Andy [his son] has been in care before and he's confused and sad." Worker: "That must make it hard on you to see him."**

While acknowledging that expressed affect is important, the worker often must move slightly ahead of the client and begin to express the client's feelings *before* they actually are verbalized. A client may be able only to come close to articulating difficult feelings. By acknowledging the affect or the concern that is slightly ahead of the client's words, the worker serves the function of giving the client permission to move into a deeper area of work. If the worker is not too far ahead of the client, it provides a striking example of the worker's empathy and frees the client for further risk.

9. Putting the Client's Feelings into Words — Articulating the client's feelings slightly ahead of him or her. For example: Client, referring to the difficulty of visiting a placed child: "Like what do I say to him?" Worker: "Like when he asks: When do I come home?"

Workers may convey their empathic response through nonverbal facial expressions, physical attitude, or a silence that conveys shared emotion.

When the difficulty of dealing with feelings is discussed with students or workers, they often describe their reluctance to invite true expression of feelings as being directly related to not knowing what to do with the feelings when they are exposed. The fear is expressed that the client will declare his or her affect, the worker will respond empathically, the client will deepen his or her emotional response, the worker will be further drawn in, and the two will be trapped in what Schwartz has termed a cycle of depression.[17] A closely related skill, one that may help break this cycle, involves helping the client see the connection between his or her affect and actions.

10. Connecting Feelings to Work — Efforts to make connections between the client's feelings and behavior. For example: "I think it's hard to tell your child you don't know when he's coming home, but clearing that up might make it easier for you both."

Sharing the Worker's Feelings

A critical variable in this practice approach relates to the worker's ability to present himself or herself to the client as a real human being. Theories of the helping process, which have borrowed their practice model from the medical paradigm, all too often have presented the worker as an objective, clinical, somewhat detached, and knowledgeable professional. Direct expression of the worker's real feelings (e.g., anger, fear, love, ambivalence), has been presented as "unprofessional." This has resulted in a concept of professionalism that seems to ask workers to choose between themselves as persons and their professional selves.

This choice is impossible since it assumes the existence of a dichotomy between "personal" and "professional." The interactional model suggests that the helping person becomes an effective helper only when able to synthesize real feelings and professional function. Without such a synthesis, the result will be a loss of spontaneity and the portrayal of the professional as one who has everything worked out, a paragon of competence who is never at a loss or flustered.

Clients do not need perfect, unruffled workers who have worked out all of life's problems. They need real human beings, like themselves, who care deeply about their clients' success at their work, express their own sense of urgency, and openly acknowledge their feelings. As clients begin to experience workers as real people, they can begin to use them and their function effectively. If the worker is presented without signs of humanity, the client constantly will be testing to find the flaws in the facade or idealizing the worker as the "answer" to the problems.

Workers often express concern about spontaneity and expressing their feelings. They are worried that they will make mistakes, act out, or perhaps hurt a client. What they often fail to recognize is that clients can forgive a mistake more easily than they can an image of perfection. Young workers, in particular, express the fear that the clients will not "respect their expertise" if they reveal their flaws and limitations.

A classic example is the standard routine between young workers and parents on first visits. At the appropriate time the parent inquires if the worker has children of his or her own. The response of, "No, but I have taken a number of courses in child psychology," serves only to cut the worker off from the parent. Consider an alternative worker response: "I was worried too, about being able to understand how it is for you as a mother with the difficulties you face." This response has to help the mother see the worker as more of a real person, which could mark the beginning of a potentially deeper relationship.

The skills related to feelings are as follows:

11. **Displaying Feelings Openly — Honest expressions of worker affective responses, both positive and negative. For example: "It makes me mad to work this hard for weeks on the school thing and then you refuse to take a risk and try going back again."**
12. **Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings — For example: "When you talk about missing your father that way, it hits me pretty hard in my own feelings — I think I can understand how that must feel."**

It should be pointed out that we are describing the sharing of worker feelings only in relation to the client's sense of concern and the process between them. If workers were to respond to their clients' problems by describing all of their own, they would lose their sense of function and their ability to help.

Another way in which a worker shares feelings would be to project an honest belief in the ability of the client to tackle the problems that have brought them together. The worker expresses this support while still exploring and recognizing the client's ambivalence. This display of faith in the client's potential serves to strengthen the client's own view of the future possibilities.

13. Supporting the Client's Strength — Expressions of belief in the client's ability to take some step, or get through a difficult time. For example: "I know it's going to be tough to confront Jim, but I think you're ready."

The Demand for Work

Central to an understanding of the helping process is the question of ambivalence. Clients will be of two minds about proceeding with the work. A part of the client, representing his or her strength, will be moving toward work, understanding, and growth. The other part, representing resistance, will be pulling back from what is perceived as a difficult process. Work often will mean discussing painful subjects, experiencing difficult feelings, recognizing one's own contribution to the problems, and lowering established defenses. Logical next steps may require a client to tackle a difficult task to confront someone directly or to put off immediate satisfaction. Whatever the experience involved, there will be some degree of ambivalence. The degree of movement toward the work as compared with the movement away from the work will vary with each individual and the nature of the problem.[18]

The important thing is to recognize that ambivalence is quite normal. In fact a lack of ambivalence may mean that the work is an illusion, and the real issues are still unexplored. If the client could have moved easily to take the logical next steps, he or she would not have needed the worker's help. The worker, for example, who encourages the single mother to register for job training, should not be surprised if the following week the mother has not acted, even though she agreed to check it out. The ambivalence, the fear of a new demand on her in the job world, and her guilt about leaving the children in day care all may have been present in the previous session, but left unexplored.

As the client moves to discuss a painful area, he or she will often appear to move away from the work. The client will change the subject, overwhelm the worker with the global nature of the problem, externalize the problem by blaming others involved, or exhibit any other number of signs of resistance. The critical understanding needed in relation to resistance is that it is part of the work. Resistance is a sign to the worker that the work is becoming real and evoking the natural defenses of the client.

Schwartz pointed out that it is because of this natural process that the worker must make a consistent demand for work.[19] The demand may be expressed in many ways, but it is generally experienced by the client as the worker saying: "I mean business." It is a critical skill because it conveys to the client the worker's belief in the client's strength and the worker's willingness to deal with even the toughest problems and feelings faced by the client. It is precisely this additional pull that clients need at that moment to mobilize their strength and to take their next steps.

It is important to note that the demand for work needs to be linked closely to the empathic skills mentioned earlier. A worker who is demanding, but not empathic, will be seen by the client as rejecting. On the other hand, the worker who is empathic but makes no demand, will appear to the client as easy to put off. It is the critical synthesis of these two behaviors that will lead to effective work.

A demand for work can be demonstrated in a number of ways. For example, presenting overwhelming problems of a global nature is a form of defense against the work. The partializing skill demands work by converting the problem into more manageable segments.

14. Partializing the Client's Concerns — For example: "So now you're worried about where you're going to stay and you also have to face saying goodbye to Tom."

When a theme begins to get difficult, a client will sometimes move to another as a means of avoidance. Consistent focussing by the worker can be helpful.

15. Holding to Focus — For example: "Let's stay with the question of where you're going to stay and then pick up on how you can handle Tom."

Artificial consensus, putting a worker off by seeming to agree with an observation or a suggestion for a course of action, can block further work. The skill of the worker here would involve searching for hidden ambivalence.

16. Checking for Artificial Consensus — For example: "You say you are going to speak with Tom, but don't you think that's going to be tough to do?"

And finally, when the work seems superficial and the worker senses a reluctance to make a real investment, a challenge to the illusion of work and a demand for more investment may help.

17. Pointing Out the Illusion of Work — For example: "You know you're joking now about that conversation, but it seems to me it must have hit you harder at the time."

The demand for work quality is broader than we have conveyed in this section. It permeates the process and is found in every phase of work. For example, the direct contracting efforts represent to the client a demand for work. It is important to note that the demand for work can be made gently at times, but strongly at others. It depends on the worker and the situation. However it is expressed, if the empathic quality also is present, it will be experienced by the client as real concern: the worker cares enough about the client to insist that he or she do what they came together to do. This is a difficult and advanced skill for workers to obtain because it requires that they be fairly confident about their work, since they must present a demand in the face of client resistance.

Identifying Obstacles

As the work proceeds, obstacles will emerge to frustrate the ability of the client to use the worker's help. For example, if a client finds it difficult to discuss thoughts and feelings in relation to sex, the worker may be prevented from helping. Societal taboos are strong in areas related to sex, money, authority, and dependency, and many clients will not discuss these subjects easily.

As the worker and client deepen their relationship there is bound to be a flow of affect between them, both positive and negative. Fear of dependency on a helping person will be heightened on the part of the client. A worker may push too strongly, without a real sense of empathy and the client may feel angry. These feelings, when left unspoken, may serve to block the work. The relationship between worker and client is further affected by the dynamics of "transference" and "countertransference." The client may attribute to the worker feelings, reactions, or qualities that reflect the client's relationships with other authority figures.[20] In turn, countertransference may affect how a worker responds to a client.

An additional example of a potential obstacle might be the client's reaction to the agency's policies and rules. Anger in relation to the agency may be suppressed because of fear of retaliation on the part of the worker. This anger, however, may emerge as apathy or a general lack of investment.

Each of these examples have in common the existence of an obstacle in the *process* of the work that blocks the *task* to be carried out. It is essential that the worker monitor the *way of working* with the client so that he or she can identify obstacles when they emerge, in order to free the client for work.

It is important that when obstacles are identified, the client not be made to feel guilty about their existence. Taboos are strong and it is natural for clients to have difficulty in sensitive areas. It *is* difficult for many clients to raise negative feelings about people in authority. Fear of retaliation on the part of a powerful agency is not at all unrealistic. The worker must try to convey the sense that the emergence of an obstacle is not the client's fault, that he or she is not a "bad" client because of this. However, attention to an obstacle is a necessary condition if the work is to proceed.

Often, simply identifying the existence of an obstacle and thus helping the client understand the processes allows the client to take control of the work and move past the block. Sometimes blocks have to be explored, with the client having an opportunity to discuss the obstacles and to work through some of the feelings around them. The purpose of discussing obstacles is not to change the client's attitudes toward them, but rather to free the client to work. Taboos do not have to be removed from all situations, but only in relation to the interview, since they impede the work. As obstacles are revealed, the worker needs to guard against a subtle subversion of the original contract in which the new work becomes that of helping the client gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles. For example, causal relations may be explored to try to determine why obstacles exist, but this has little to do with the help the client has requested. The interviews then will begin to lose sight of the original contract, as worker and client spend all their time trying to understand their relationship.

Schwartz warned of the possibility of falling into the trap of artificially dichotomizing process and task.[21] Just as attention to the contract without attention to the way of working will lead to blocking the work, attention to the way of working while ignoring the contract will lead to a frustrating subversion of work.

The true synthesis of process and task is realized when the worker sees the obstacles in the process as handles for further work. For example, examining the relationship between the worker and the client offers many opportunities for the worker to connect the feelings the client has in this relationship with those he or she experiences toward other authority figures (e.g., foster parent, boss, or teacher). The thrust of the worker always should be to use the real experience in the interviews as meaningful examples of the way in which the client attempts to negotiate systems *and* as handles for deepening the work of the contract.

18. Supporting the Client in Taboo Areas — Helping the client discuss taboo subjects such as sex, money, dependency, and so on. For example: "It takes courage to talk about these problems in your sexual relationship with your wife — stay with it."
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles to Work — Pointing out when client feelings appear to block discussion. For example: "Every time we get close to talking about how you feel about leaving the group home, you change the subject. Is it too tough to talk about?"

The third skill deals with the exploration of the relationship between worker and client, particularly the skill of asking for negative feedback.

20. Dealing with the Authority Theme — For example: "When I thought about our last session, I thought that I really missed what you were saying. How about it, have I been missing?"

Providing Data

Data are defined here as facts, ideas, values, and beliefs that the worker has accumulated from life experiences and makes available to the client. This often is an area of great concern for workers who feel that they do not want to impose their view of reality on the client. It is important to recognize, however, that the client perceives the worker as a knowledgeable person, and counts on the worker's ability to contribute to his or her growing perception of social reality. In fact, a worker who withholds data relevant to the client's task may be perceived as uncaring.

The worker's concern about providing data is a real one. It would not be helpful for the client simply to substitute the worker's sense of reality for his or her own. Therefore Schwartz placed a number of qualifications on the sharing of data.[22] First, the worker needs to share ideas in such a way that they are open to challenge. If the ideas do not ring true to the client they should not be accepted. If the client tends to accept the worker's perceptions uncritically, real learning may not take place. The worker needs to point this out to the client and develop the client's ability to challenge the worker's perceptions and to use only what makes sense. Rather than using "expertise" to convince a client, a worker needs to help the client see the data as a contribution to the client's work, rather than as an answer to the client's problems.

A second qualification is that the data provided must be related to the client's current theme of concern. Workers must resist the temptation to teach the client something the client may need in the future, or that the worker feels is important. Unless data are relevant to a current piece of work, they will represent the worker's effort to "change" the client and will be perceived as unhelpful. The client must now invest energy in figuring out what the worker has "up his or her sleeve."

The described model suggests that a worker share data freely, data that are related to the current work of the client, data that will add to the client's perspective while still leaving the client free to reject the worker's view. Workers who withhold data under the assumption that the clients will "learn better if it comes from them," usually end up supplying it anyway, but in a covert manner. For example, they may ask leading questions attempting to get the client to "discover" an answer they already possess. Clients will pick this up quickly and usually resent the process. In its worst form, clients will divert their energy from their concerns in an effort to find out what the worker wants them to say. Schwartz described this as "the game of educational hide and seek."[23]

Clients appreciate it when a worker shares views, providing these are presented as the worker's views and not as absolute truth. They can accept data if they feel free to reject it and want help when it relates to their current task. They will perceive such a worker as a giving person, thus deepening the relationship.

> **21. Providing Data — Sharing facts, ideas, values, and beliefs relevant to the client's work and unavailable to him or her. For example: "In my experience, you really can't run away from a problem like this; it's your problem, however, so you are going to have to decide."**

Dealing with Systems

As the worker moves to help the client, he or she remains constantly aware of the client's efforts to negotiate important systems. For example, school, work, marital partners, parents, the agency, and the worker all represent important systems to be dealt with. The worker recognizes that the complexity of the relationship between client and system may produce blocks, which can stem from either the client or the system. The worker must help the client sort out perceptions of the systems people who matter, and go beyond stereotypes. Distorted perceptions may be blocking access to those systems needed for the client's fulfillment. It is a specialized form of contributing data in which the work offers alternative interpretations of reality.

22. Viewing Systems People in New Ways — For example: "Perhaps your teacher is on your back all the time because he's worried about your passing; it may be his way of trying to help."

In addition to helping clients view the system differently, it also may be important for clients to deal directly with the important people in their social surroundings. The worker may intervene on behalf of a client either as a broker or an advocate. Many circumstances require that clients carry out the engagement themselves. In fact the client's growth may lie precisely in acquiring the ability to deal with each system that must be faced.

In the mediation function, as described earlier, the worker might meet with the systems representative (teacher, doctor, etc.) with or without the client, but always with the client's knowledge. The purpose of the meeting is to open up communications between the system and the client. For example, a meeting with a teacher might focus on helping the teacher understand a foster adolescent's truancy not as a turning away from the school, but rather as a reaction to feelings of rejection by the teacher. The teacher may not have perceived that the child felt rejected. The "systems work" by the worker might help the client and the teacher begin a more effective dialogue.

23. Contacting Systems People Directly — Efforts on the worker's part to meet with significant people in the client's systems to open up effective communication channels. For example: "Suppose I meet with your teacher and try to help him understand why you feel he doesn't like you. That might make it easier for you to talk about it with him. I think I can say it in a way that won't make him mad."

Work Phase Summary

The picture of the worker in the work phase, as drawn in this somewhat simplified description, reveals someone who pays attention to *sessional contracting* each session. As the client tells his or her story, the worker helps with *elaborating* behaviors. The worker ensures that the work is invested with real affect by using *empathic* skills and by *sharing his or her own feelings* along the way. When ambivalence results in signs of resistance, the worker helps by maintaining a persistent *demand for work*. When obstacles, such as taboos, block the work, the worker will *identify obstacles* and explore their relation to the task at hand. The worker will *provide data* freely that is relevant to the client. The worker also will pay special attention to the client's perceptions of systems people and will make *direct contact with systems people* when needed, in order to free the lines of communication with the client.

THE ENDING AND TRANSITION PHASE

As the work with a client draws to a close, either because the client is finished or the worker must leave, the relationship will enter the ending phase. This phase can be the most productive, but its dynamics are so complicated that a work blockage often results. The following summary presents the dynamics and skills of this phase as described by Schwartz.[24]

The great difficulty with endings relates to the fact that separation from people who have become important is painful. When one has worked to build a caring relationship it is hard to give it up. Guilt often is present during endings, with clients feeling that if they had worked harder and done their part more effectively, perhaps more work could have been accomplished.

The flow of affect, both positive and negative, between worker and client is heightened during the ending phase. This is partly in response to the separation itself, but also because very little time remains to say things that have been left unsaid during the work phase. Positive feelings as well as sadness may be part of the ending emotions. Workers often have a hard time believing the depths of feelings that clients have for them. They have an even more difficult time with the feelings of denial, guilt, sadness, and caring that they themselves may experience toward the client. The other side of the ending feeling may well be relief that the work is over, and a feeling that the client is ready to move on to new experiences.

Because of the general reluctance to face endings, both on the part of the worker and the client, endings often are handled too quickly, without an opportunity for the client and worker to deal with the complex feelings involved. The phases involved in the ending of any important relationship are similar to those described in relation to death and dying.[25]

First there is the process of denial, in which the client does not face the upcoming ending. Sometimes this shows itself as a lack of belief that the ending date is approaching. Since the client needs time to deal with the ending, encompass it, and not experience it as a sharp rejection by the worker, it is important for the worker to point out the ending well in advance in order to allow the process to become established. Workers often avoid mentioning endings because they share the difficulty of facing the termination of an important relationship. Denial by workers is common as they experience the sadness and guilt ascribed to the client. It is only when workers can come to grips with their own feelings that they can begin to help the client in this important phase.

24. Pointing Out the Endings — For example: "Before we begin today, I wanted to remind you that we only have four sessions left."

After the worker has set the process in motion and moved past the client's evasion, the second phase often contains expressions of anger, both direct and indirect, toward the worker. Missed interviews, unusual testiness, and other cues may reveal the emergence of this stage. The worker must call attention to the cues as they appear even if the client denies them, so that the client has a chance to understand the process and take control of it.

Anger may be followed by a period of mourning that often is characterized by apathy, sadness, and a lack of productivity. The next stage may involve determined efforts to demonstrate that the client can do without the worker and carry out important tasks on his or her own. Finally, one can observe what Schwartz has referred to as the "farewell party syndrome," the client's effort to end the experience on a high note, a celebration and an overly positive interpretation of what has been done together.[26] These are efforts to avoid the realities of the sadness in endings.

In order to make the ending phase productive, it is critical that workers put themselves into the picture with all of their own feelings.

25. Sharing Ending Feelings — For example: "You know we have been working together for a long time. You have come to mean a lot to me, and I'm going to miss seeing you after next month."

While the process of ending must be dealt with, it also is a time for work on the substance of the contract. In the ending phase, the worker needs to ask for a summing up, a pulling together of the experiences to add to the learning. Often clients will respond with general comments to requests for evaluation and review of learning. For example, the client may say: "I learned a great deal about myself." The worker then needs to ask for specific examples of what the client feels has been learned.

26. Asking for a Review of the Learning — For example: "You say our meetings have been important to you; can you tell me in what ways they have been helpful? What do you think you have learned?"

The client's feelings in the ending phase must be dealt with. The worker wants to work on unfinished business, to encourage the expression of both the positive and negative feelings, and to use the client's feelings by connecting them to the substance of the work. If the worker examines the termination process closely, it often will be possible to discover direct connections between the process of ending the helping relationship and the work of the client.

For example, in ending with a foster child who is leaving the care of the agency, the worker might use the experience to help the client generalize to the endings of other relationships the client has had. The termination of close relationships has been a part of the foster child's way of life. Understanding both the pain involved and the importance of being willing to invest in new relationships rather than holding back to avoid the risk of separation may emerge in the ending phase, since each is a powerful theme of work.

27. Reaching for Ending Feelings — Attempts to help the client articulate the feelings associated with termination of the relationship. For example: "You seem to be saying, in a lot of different ways, that you're going to be missing our sessions as well. It's great to be able to move on alone, but it's awfully tough to say goodbye."

A number of propositions about behavior and practice constructs that comprise the theoretical basis for the model have been reviewed and the related research questionnaire items identified. Three charts that summarize the underlying propositions about behavior for three of the four phases can be found in Appendix E. Each has been formulated as a testable hypothesis that can be verified using existing research findings or through new research.

In the next two chapters, the results of two different approaches to measuring these skills are reported. In the final chapter, an approach to teaching these skills through modeling them in the classroom is discussed and illustrated.

NOTES

1. For a full discussion of the theory and this author's efforts to elaborate on it, see William Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups: An Interactionist Approach," *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, Vol. II (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1971), pp. 1252-63; William Schwartz, "The Social Worker in the Group," in *New Perspectives on Services to Groups: Theory, Organization, Practice* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1961), pp. 7-34; Lawrence Shulman, *A Casebook of Social Work with Groups: The Mediating Model* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1969); Lawrence Shulman, "Social Work Skill: The Anatomy of a Helping Act," *Social Work Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 29-48; and Lawrence Shulman, *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups* (Itasca, Ill.: Peacock Press, 1979).
2. For an expanded discussion of these skills, the practice framework, and the impact of variant elements see Shulman, *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups, op. cit.*
3. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
4. Elliot Studt, "Social Work Theory and Implications for the Practice of Methods," *Social Work Education Reporter*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1968), p. 23.
5. Harriet M. Bartlett, *The Common Base of Social Work Practice* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1970); and William Reid and Laura Epstein, *Task Centered Casework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).
6. Charles Garvin, "Education for Generalist Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Current Modalities," *Teaching for Competence in the Delivery of Direct Services* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1976).
7. Francis J. Turner, "Interlocking Theoretical Approaches to Clinical Practice: Some Pedagogical Perspectives," *Canadian Journal of Social Work Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1976), p. 7.
8. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
9. Schwartz, *New Perspectives on Services to Groups, op. cit.*, p. 15.
10. For discussions of the worker's role in relation to the system, see William Schwartz, "Private Troubles and Public Issues: One Social Work Job or Two?" *Social Welfare Forum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Shulman, *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups, op. cit.*, Chapters 15 and 16; and George Brager and Harry Specht, "Mobilizing the Poor for Social Action," *Social Welfare Forum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 197-210.
11. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.* For an early discussion of the importance of time, see Jessie Taft, "Time as the Medium of the Helping Process," *Jewish Social Services Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1919), pp. 1-12.
12. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
13. *Ibid.* For further discussion of the beginning phase, see Helen Harris Perlman, *Social Casework: A Problem Solving Process* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957); Florence Hollis, *Casework: A Psychosocial Therapy* (New York: Random House, 1964); and Herbert S. Strean, *Clinical Social Work: Theory and Practice* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).
14. These behavior factors are discussed and illustrated with excerpts from a social work interview on the videotape program entitled, "Social Work Practice Behavior in Two Child Welfare Agencies" (see Appendix C for a description of this program).
15. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
16. For a discussion of the impact of feelings, see Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969).
17. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*

18. For a discussion of resistance, see Ruth E. Smalley, *Theory for Social Work Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Strean, *op. cit.*; and Hollis, *op. cit.*
19. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
20. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Perlman, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78, 81.
21. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. See Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).
26. Schwartz, "Social Work with Groups," *op. cit.*

2

MEASURING HELPING SKILLS USING CLIENT FEEDBACK

Twenty-seven worker helping skills were identified in Chapter One. This chapter describes a questionnaire designed to determine how frequently a social worker employs these skills. The questionnaire was completed by clients and thus is a measure of their perceptions of the worker's skill use. It was developed as part of a four-year research project studying the nature of the helping process.[1] The study was undertaken to explore the relationship between the use of the skills described in Chapter One and the ability of workers to develop positive working relationships with clients and to be helpful. The questionnaire measuring social work practice skill, The Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire, was one of two instruments developed and tested during this study. A second questionnaire was designed to measure clients' satisfaction with the service provided by their social workers. Client perceptions were used to obtain measures of both the social worker's practice skill as well as client satisfaction.

This chapter does not describe the entire study. Instead, it focuses on the instrument developed to measure social work practice skill. The first section reviews the literature relevant to the study of practice skill. The next section illustrates how the 27 skills were translated into questionnaire items on the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire. This is followed by a description of efforts to determine the reliability and the validity of client feedback data. The reader should be cautioned that the questionnaire is in an embryonic stage of development. It is presented as an example of work in progress of an ongoing effort to operationalize and measure practice skill. A general description of the procedures employed and the findings of this developmental stage are shared in the text to alert the reader to its limitations. More detailed findings for those interested in the methodology of instrument development are included in Appendix D.

The methodology of the general study also is briefly reviewed, including its limitations, so that the reader may have a framework for evaluating the findings presented in the balance of the chapter. These findings include skill profiles of the average worker in the study and comparisons of workers with differing educational backgrounds. The skill profiles are used as the basis for a discussion of the order of skill development by new workers and students. The final section discusses further work required in the development of this instrument as well as suggestions on how worker skill measures can be used as part of a training program.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Efforts to investigate the effectiveness of social work practice, and that of other helping professions, have more often than not led to frustrating results. Fischer, in his controversial article entitled "Is Casework Effective?" reviewed a number of social work studies. His general finding was that casework did not appear to have been proven effective.[2] Briar argued along the same lines, referring specifically to the discouraging findings of the Girls at Vocational High Study.[3] In a review of research on treatment intervention, Santilli stressed the findings which indicated that treatment could cause either deterioration or constructive growth in individuals. She suggested that this knowledge "is awesome and imposes upon the treatment professions the responsibility for discovering what qualities in therapeutic intervention produce these differential results."[4] Close examination of the studies reviewed by Fischer indicates, as he acknowledged, that the treatment or independent variable tends to be vaguely defined.

A review of the literature undertaken in connection with the study for which the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire was developed supported this contention. For example, one definition of treatment described the aspirations of the workers involved ("to help the client function in a personally satisfying, socially desirable way").[5] Others described it in terms of the modality of services ("marriage counselling").[6] In other studies, treatment intervention was defined through a description of the intensity of the contact ("3.5 contacts per week").[7] Length of time of contact also was used in one definition ("continuously available counsellor providing skilled and directed friendship for a median period of five years").[8] Individual versus group sessions also were used to differentiate service.[9] Descriptions of the provider of service were used in other studies ("treatment by psychoanalyst, psychologist, social worker").[10] And, finally, combinations of descriptions such as "trained workers" with reduced caseloads were used as a definition.[11] The critical variable — often unexplained in these studies — was what happened in the interaction between the client and the worker. Most studies of this type indicated a lack of positive outcomes.

A myth exists — one fostered by some professional literature — that if one were to define treatment as "the services of an MSW worker" we would all know what that meant. In reality, what an MSW social worker actually does with a client varies widely according to his or her personality, training, theoretical orientation, years of experience, supervision, and agency circumstance, and the motivation and skills of the particular client. The interaction — what is actually said by worker and client — is usually well-hidden from supervisors, colleagues, administrators, and researchers. The profession appears to be working within a research model that has attempted to examine the impact of practice variables without a clear definition and measurement of the variables to be studied.

It is interesting to note that one finds an increase in the number of studies indicating the significant impact of services as the treatment variable becomes more clearly defined. In the following studies, while the moment-to-moment interactive skills of the workers were not identified, one could get a clear sense of the type of work involved.

For example, in a study by Geismar and Krisberg, treatment was defined as information and advice, counselling on interpersonal problems, vocational counselling, job finding, and housing counselling. There were significant improvements in the treatment group as compared to a control group.[12] In another example, in a study by Schreiber, a particular model of group therapy was used as a treatment variable (as developed by the Palo Alto Mental Research Institute). Her findings indicated some significant improvements.[13] In a study of brief and extended casework by Reid and Shyne, analysis of the practice indicated that workers operating under the short-term treatment approach tended to be more focused and direct in the early stages of their work and possessed greater clarity of purpose. It was suggested that this clarity of purpose and focus, which was a result of the short-term treatment approach, may have had a positive impact, in that short-term families did somewhat better than families exposed to long-term treatment. This finding was qualified because of the absence of a control group.[14] In a study of efforts to train parents to be more effective, Rose found that parental training with a behavior modification approach had a positive impact on helping parents deal with their children.[15]

While the evaluation of our effectiveness appears to improve with increasing definition of treatment variables, these general descriptions are still not clear enough for us to understand the precise interaction taking place. For example, in a study of experimental procedures used at intake, Krause differentiated four patterns of intake procedure: (1) explaining agency services, (2) trying to understand what the client wanted, (3) clarifying agency expectations, and (4) trying to understand client concerns about the use of the services. No differences were found in terms of continuation of these clients regardless of the approach used.[16] One explanation of the lack of difference could be that an intake procedure might require a synthesis of these approaches. Another would be that we do not know *how* the particular worker went about carrying out these tasks. For example, one question might be: How empathic were the workers as they implemented each of these approaches?

A more recent and productive line of inquiry has emerged from the examination of specific interactional skills. Early work in this area was undertaken by a University of Wisconsin psychotherapy research group. A number of concepts developed by Rogers in his client-centered approach to practice have been operationalized and tested.[17] These include the capacity of the therapist to empathize with the client, to possess warmth and accept the client, and to be a genuine, integrated person in the relationship.[18] The work of Truax and Carkhuff has been central in exploring the impact of the use of these behaviors on therapists' effectiveness.[19] Additional variables that have indicated some tentative positive relationships with outcomes have included immediacy in the relationship, relevant therapists' self-disclosure, and facilitative confrontation. Scales for rating therapists' activity have been developed and tested through a number of research studies.

One might infer from this review that one of the problems in our research has been that we have been asking the wrong questions. Instead of inquiring whether or not casework is effective, we may be at the stage where the question should be: What is casework? This would lead to a research approach that I would describe as *interactional.* Rather than focusing on outcomes alone, we need to operationalize the helping person's behaviors and then examine these in relation to outcomes. There is evidence that a shift toward curiosity about method is taking place within a number of helping professions. It was to pursue this specific line of inquiry that the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire was developed.

Since client perceptions are used in this questionnaire (as well as in others described in this review), it is important to examine the literature dealing with the use of client perceptions. There has been some controversy in this area. For example, Mayer and Timms in one study, and Garfield in another, indicated differences between clients and workers in their perceptions of the helping process,[20] while Barrett-Lennard in one study, and Ballard and Mudd in another indicated some support for convergence of client and worker perceptions.[21]

In a study comparing caseworker, client, and peer perceptions of empathy, Weeks et al. pointed out that conflicting studies may have been the result of overgeneralized and vague processes under examination. They suggested that "the need then is for further research comparing perceptions, focusing on specific factors of the helping relationship." [22] Their study selected the empathy scale of the questionnaire developed by Truax and Carkhuff.[23] The results of the study indicated that caseworkers, their peers, and their clients perceive the caseworker's empathy at approximately the same level.

Another interpretation of differences between a client's view of a therapist's behavior, the therapist's view, and the perceptions of third-party judges is that each may be perceiving a different phenomenon. Since perceptions are influenced by one's position in the system (e.g., therapist, worker, or observer), each may be *accurately* perceiving slightly different events.

The questionnaire described in this chapter needs to be placed in the context of this literature review. First, it represents an attempt to operationalize the social workers' practice skill (the independent variable). Second, it was developed in the context of a study attempting to determine the relationship between the use of these skills and a number of outcome measures. Third, some of the behaviors described on the questionnaire are similar to those described on other scales. For example, empathic responses and the ability of workers to disclose their feelings are included. Since the focus of the study was on the development of a theoretical model of practice, a number of other skills have been included. Finally, since the instrument is a client-perception questionnaire, it raises questions of both reliability and validity. These will be explored in some detail in this chapter; however, the reader should recognize that the questionnaire is still in an embryonic stage of development.

SOCIAL WORKER BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

The first step in developing the questionnaire involved translating the 27 worker helping skills into questionnaire items using terms that clients could understand. For example, Skill 15, *holding to focus*, appeared as follows: "When I began to discuss a particular concern (for example: my child's difficulty at school) my worker kept me on the topic." The respondent could choose one of the following responses: (1) often, (2) fairly often, (3) seldom, (4) never, or (5) no answer.

Since the study was set in two child welfare agencies, five versions of the form were developed in which the examples for each item were varied to suit the potential respondents (natural parents, adolescents, unwed parents, adoptive parents, and foster parents). Table 2.1 lists the 27 skills and the questionnaire item associated with each. The examples are not included. A complete sample of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A, along with illustrations of how each version was changed for different categories of respondent.

Since a number of respondents completed the questionnaire for each worker, it was possible to compute an average score on each skill for each worker. The higher the number of returns, the greater the reliability one can attribute to the computed score. These average scores were used as a measure of client perception of worker skill use. Scores could range from 1 to 4, with lower scores indicating more frequent or more positive skill use.

TABLE 2.1
Social Workers' Helping Skills
And Related Questionnaire Items[a]

1. *Clarifying Purpose* – In our first meetings my worker explained the kinds of concerns we might be discussing.
2. *Clarifying Role* – My worker explained how we would work together, describing the kind of help a social worker could give.
3. *Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose* – During our first meetings, my worker asked me for my ideas on the specific subjects we would discuss together.
4. *Displaying Belief in the Potential of the Work* – During our first meetings my worker told me he or she really believed I could get help from this agency with my concerns.

5. *Reaching for Between Session Data* – My worker began our meetings by asking if anything had happened between meetings that I wanted to talk about.
6. *Moving from the General to the Specific* – When I raised a general concern my worker asked me for examples.
7. *Reaching Inside of Silences* – When I was unusually silent during our meetings, my worker tried to find out why.
8. *Understanding the Client's Feelings* – When I told my worker how I felt, he or she understood.
9. *Putting the Client's Feelings into Words* – My worker seemed to understand how I felt without my having to put it into words.
10. *Connecting Feelings to Work* – My worker helped me see how my feelings affected how I acted.
11. *Displaying Feelings Openly* – My worker let me know his or her feelings about the situations we discussed.
12. *Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings* – My worker shared many of his or her personal thoughts and feelings, which helped me get to know him or her better as a person.
13. *Supporting the Client's Strength* – My worker believed I could handle the situations we discussed.
14. *Partializing the Client's Concerns* – My worker helped me look at my concerns one at a time.
15. *Holding to Focus* – When I began to discuss a particular concern, my worker kept me on the topic.
16. *Checking for Artificial Consensus* – When I agreed with an idea too quickly, my worker asked me if I really meant it.
17. *Pointing Out the Illusion of Work* – When my worker thought I was not working hard in our discussions, he or she let me know.
18. *Supporting the Client in Taboo Areas* – My worker helped me talk about subjects which were not easy to talk about.
19. *Identifying Affective Obstacles to Work* – My worker would point out when my feelings about something made it hard for me to talk during our meetings.
20. *Dealing with the Authority Theme* – When I was upset about something my worker did or said, he or she encouraged me to talk about it.
21. *Providing Data* – My worker shared his or her suggestions about the subjects we discussed for my consideration.
22. *Viewing Systems People in New Ways* – My worker helped me to understand the behavior of other people in new ways.
23. *Contacting Systems People Directly* – When I had trouble talking to someone, my worker would meet with them to make it easier for me to speak to them.
24. *Pointing Out the Endings* – Sometime before our last meeting, my worker explained that our meetings would be ending soon.
25. *Sharing Ending Feelings* – My worker let me know how he or she felt about our finishing.
26. *Asking for a Review of the Learning* – My worker asked me what I got out of our meetings together.
27. *Reaching for Ending Feelings* – My worker asked how I felt about ending our meetings.

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[a] The examples suited to each version of the questionnaire have been omitted.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

An obvious question would be how accurate are reports of client perceptions of worker behavior? Two major subquestions are related to reliability and validity. When clients respond to this questionnaire, are they consistent in their responses? Are they consistent over time (test-retest reliability) and are they consistent with themselves (internal consistency)? Two procedures designed to explore these questions are described in this section. Even if clients prove to be consistent in their answers, this does not mean that they are providing valid descriptions of their workers' behaviors. They could be providing consistently inaccurate perceptions. A number of procedures designed to explore validity also are discussed in this section. Findings of these subdesigns are summarized, and detailed results are provided in Appendix D. It is important for the reader to understand that these results are shared to provide a sense of the strengths *and* limitations of the questionnaire so that findings can be evaluated properly.

Reliability

A representative selection of 100 clients assigned to ten workers were sent appropriate versions of the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire (SWBQ). The items on each version were identical, except that the illustrations were varied to suit the specific category of respondent. Of the 81 who returned questionnaires, 50 were sent an identical questionnaire two weeks later. Forty-five of these were returned. This constituted a test-retest procedure designed to obtain information on how stable client responses were over time. Would they tend to give the same answers each time?

A first procedure examined the reliability of the overall test score computed from the questionnaire. This was obtained by averaging the scores for all items. The correlation between the overall test scores over the two administrations of the questionnaire was .75, which was judged to be more than adequate for support of overall test score stability over time.[24] The standard error of measurement was computed as .144. In a second procedure, the internal consistency of responses was analyzed by dividing each respondent's return into roughly two equivalent sets of questions. For example, since there are four items dealing with closely related variations of empathic skills, two items were randomly assigned to each half of the test. This resulted in two half-tests, each containing a generally equivalent set of items. An average score for each of these tests was computed for each respondent and then correlations obtained between the two average scores. If there was internal consistency in the ratings, some correlation should exist between the two halves of the tests. The resultant correlation of .70 offered support for internal consistency.

Although reliability was supported for the overall test score, this is not the same as reliability for each individual item. One would expect much lower levels of reliability for individual skills. It also is possible that individual items on the questionnaire may have questionable reliability. Since individual item scores are important, an analysis was made for each skill (see Appendix D for data on each item). The results of this analysis are summarized in this section.

Of the 23 skills examined, 6 had correlations of less than .30 between results of the first and the second testing. The lowest was -.05. Of the remainder, 10 had correlations ranging between .30 and .60, and 7 had correlations ranging between .60 and a high of .86 (Table D.2). One would tend to have more confidence in the reliability of those items with higher correlations. However, this can be deceptive since the correlation is affected by how widely distributed the scores are for a particular skill.

For example, if most respondents tended to give the same score for a particular item, these scores would not be widely dispersed around the average score (this spread is measured by the standard deviation). Small standard deviations would indicate homogeneous responses and degrade the correlations. This would yield a low correlation, even though respondents indicated the same or similar responses each time. For example, questionnaire item 3, the skill of reaching for feedback on the contract statement, yielded a reliability coefficient (r) of -.05 (at such low levels of correlation the sign was not significant). And yet when the individual returns were examined, we found that 90 percent of the respondents provided the same response for this item each time, and 10 percent provided responses only one scale apart. This was one of the highest agreement percentages of all the items. However, the responses to this item for all respondents tended to be the same (mean = 2.05; s.d. = 0.22) (see Table D.1). The low level of variation in the responses tended to lower the correlation coefficient. In addition, the low variation in the responses raises questions about the high percentages of agreement. Respondents may have answered the same on both tests because one only gives one answer to this item.

Appendix D provides correlations, indication of percentages of agreement, means, and standard deviations for each item (see Tables D.1 and D.2). If a correlation is low, it is possible to check the percentages of agreement. If both are poor, then this is an indication of unreliability for that item. If the percentages of agreement are high, then a low standard deviation may provide the reason for the low correlation. Another factor to check would be the percentage of those who did not answer the item on either the test, the retest, or on both tests. When nonresponses are higher than 20 percent, there is some cause to question the reliability of the item.

Based on an analysis of the data for each item, the following inferences were made about item reliability (Table D.1). Questions are raised by the rate of nonresponse for the following items: 7 — reaching inside of silences (33%); 10 — connecting feelings to work (27%); 17 — pointing out the illusion of work (25%); 19 — identifying affective obstacles to work (36%); 20 — dealing with the authority theme (23%); and 23 — contacting systems people directly (52%). Since many of these are less-often used behaviors (according to the overall results of the study), the lack of response may have been used by clients to indicate lack of applicability of the item to their experiences with their workers. For example, the highest percentage of nonresponses was for "direct contact with systems people," an item one would expect to be less applicable to all respondents.

Items with low correlations and low percentages of agreement were the following (Table D.2): 13 — supporting the client's strength (.15); 14 — partializing the client's concerns (.17); and 20 — dealing with the authority theme (.26). As for the total questionnaire, when all items were considered, respondents tended to rate items either the same or one scale apart 94 percent of the time. This finding must be considered in light of the low range of variability of a number of items.

Finally, an analysis was undertaken to see if there was a difference in the overall scoring for each item between the first and second test. It would be important to note if there appeared to be a significant tendency to raise or lower a score on a particular item the second time the questionnaire was administered. This might indicate, for example, that the client became a more astute observer of the skill after his or her attention had been drawn to it by the first questionnaire. Scores were compared using analysis of variance techniques (Tables D.3, D.4, and D.5). Only two individual variables indicated significant changes between tests: Item 10 — connecting feelings to work, had a significantly lower mean score on the retest (2.00 to 1.63; $p \leqq .008$), and item 18 — supporting the client in taboo areas, also was significantly lower (1.90 to 1.63; $p \leqq .03$) indicating that clients judged their workers as using these skills more often the second time they completed the questionnaire. In addition, the overall average score for the questionnaire also was significantly lower the second time (2.14 to 2.03; $p \leqq .003$) indicating that clients tended to rate their workers more positively on the skill use the second time around.

Validity

A first step in examining validity involved conducting a series of interviews with respondents, workers, and supervisors to determine the clarity of the final versions. In addition, two bilingual supervisors were asked to translate the French versions into English, without having seen the English versions. The results of these efforts offered support for questionnaire face validity.

A second validity subdesign involved comparing questionnaire responses with judgments of worker skill use made by trained raters. Videotapes of 120 hours of practice involving 11 volunteer workers were examined and scored by the raters, using an observation system developed by this researcher and his team (see Chapter Three for a full description of the observation system). Computer analysis of the 98,928 observations made by the three raters was compared to questionnaire returns from the videotaped clients. Although there were a number of strong correlations between categories and groups of skills on the questionnaire, these were not high enough to provide significant support for criterion validity of the questionnaire. This was partly due to the small sample of workers (n = 11). In addition, a number of design factors may have created problems (e.g. clients generally were reporting on their total experience with the worker when they filled out the questionnaire, while the observers were only reporting on four to six sessions). Also, the argument that raters and clients *validly* perceived the process differently could be advanced.

A third subdesign exploring criterion validity involved comparing the average scores on each skill for 25 workers in the study (computed from their client returns on the SWBQ) with their own ratings of skill use. Workers were asked to rate themselves after data for the study had been collected and before they knew their own results. On the overall questionnaire, workers scored themselves the same or one scale apart from their clients' ratings 81 percent of the time. An analysis of percent of agreement for individual items also was conducted and the findings can be found in Appendix D.

To facilitate comparison of workers' self-scores with clients' ratings of them, the average score provided by clients was rounded to the following scale: 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, and 3.5. Table D.7 provides the percentage of differences between the workers' perceptions and those of the clients. Combining the percentage of same score with the percentage of scores .5 apart (the worker's self-score on the skill and his or her clients' perception were the same or only .5 apart from each other), we found the following distribution of the 23 skills: 1 (over 90% agreement); 2 (80-89%); 4 (70-79%); 4 (60-69%); 4 (50-59%); 5 (40-49%); and 3 (30-39%). The three with the lowest percentages of agreement were: item 7 — reaching inside of silences; item 10 — connecting feelings to work; and item 19 — identifying affective obstacles to work. These also were identified earlier as items having more than 20 percent nonresponse on the test and retest reliability results.

The items in the 40 to 49 percent range of agreement or .5 disagreement were: item 5 — reaching for between session data; item 6 — moving from the general to the specific; item 17 — pointing out the illusion of work; item 20 — dealing with the authority theme; and item 23 — contacting systems people directly. Of these items, the last three also were identified as having more than 20 percent nonreturn on the earlier test and retest reliability results. Dealing with the authority theme also was identified as an item with low correlation and low percentage of agreement on those returns.

These results are difficult to interpret for a number of reasons. First, there is still the problem of a small range of responses for both the clients and the workers on many skills. There is a greater likelihood of agreement when the range is small. In addition, disagreement between worker's and client's perceptions does not necessarily mean that the client is wrong. The earlier review of the literature indicated some evidence of discord between worker's and client's perceptions, particularly when the latter were negative. That is, workers who were less-skilled in certain areas had greater differences with their clients than workers with more positive skill levels. There was a tendency in the data of this analysis of SWBQ returns indicating that the greatest disparities between worker's and client's views were with workers who had the poorest overall skill scores. While there are obvious limitations to the interpretation of these data, there were a large number of skills in which workers' perceptions of their skill use were close to those of their clients.

A fourth approach to exploring criterion validity provides what is perhaps the most important area of validity testing of the questionnaire. This relates to the following question: Does a difference in the overall scores on this questionnaire or on specific items make any difference in terms of other outcome measures? Put another way, do workers with more positive scores on the SWBQ appear to be more effective and does the use of any of the identified skills appear to make workers more effective? In the final analysis, it is the answer to these questions that are most important in judging instrument validity. In order to discuss this form of criterion validity, it is necessary to describe briefly the major research project for which the SWBQ was developed.

All 118 workers in two child welfare agencies (The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and the Children's Service Centre of Montreal) were included in the project. Questionnaires were mailed to over 4,000 of their clients and foster parents, and there was a return rate of over 53 percent. In preparing the mailing, the total caseload for each worker was randomly split into two, generally matched groups, and one of these groups (representing half of the worker's caseload) received the SWBQ. The other half received another instrument called the Service Satisfaction Questionnaire. Key items on this second questionnaire dealt with the client's perception of the state of the working relationship (How satisfied are you with how you and your worker get along?) and the worker's helpfulness (In general, how helpful has your worker been?).[25]

Thus it was possible, using the SWBQ, to obtain measures on client perceptions of worker skill use (overall scores and specific skill scores) as well as their perceptions of the working relationship and the worker's helpfulness. A major line of inquiry of the main study explored the theoretical implications of the association between worker's skill use and these outcome measures. For our immediate purposes, only two of these analyses need to be discussed in connection with criterion validity of the SWBQ. First, a group of workers with the most positive average scores on the SWBQ were compared to a group of workers with the most negative scores. The comparison focused on their working relationship and helpfulness as judged by their clients. In the second, the correlations between specific skill items and relationship and helpfulness were examined.

Comparisons of workers with positive and negative SWBQ scores. Thirty workers were selected from the total sample (n = 118) for further study. Fifteen of these had the most positive SWBQ average scores and 15 the least positive. Workers with less than four SWBQ returns were not included in the sample. Scores for the positive group ranged from 1.64 to 2.03, and scores for the negative group from 2.45 to 2.90.

If the overall score on the SWBQ actually provides a measure of the worker's skill use, then one would expect differences in how the two groups were judged on the outcome measures (working relationship and helpfulness). The reader is reminded that the questionnaires used to obtain data on relationship and helpfulness were filled out by a different set of clients than those who reported on worker's skill. This procedure was followed in order to maintain independence between the predictor variable (worker behavior) and the outcome variables (relationship and helpfulness). We felt it would be advantageous to employ this procedure so that the responses on one questionnaire would not be influenced by the client's reactions to having filled out the other. Average scores were used to assign skill, relationship, and helpfulness results for each worker. The results of the analysis indicated that workers with more positive SWBQ scores also had more positive relationship scores (an average of 1.46 compared to 1.74) and more positive helpfulness scores (an average of 1.46 compared to 1.80).

To determine the significance of the differences between these two groups, the analysis of variance technique was employed.[26] This analysis indicated the following significant differences for both variables: relationship ($p \leqq .05$) and helpfulness ($p \leqq .02$).

While these results offer some support for the criterion validity of the overall test score, it is important to identify the limitations of this analysis. For example, clients were not randomly assigned to these workers, which could call into question the validity of the results. If workers exhibited a sharp difference in their patterns of work, perhaps supervisors assigned clients to them in a selective manner. One group may have had more difficult cases than the other. Selectivity could supply an alternative explanation for the differences. Recognizing this limitation and others to be discussed later in this chapter, these results still offer some support for criterion validity.

Criterion validity for individual items. A second analysis involved computing correlations between each of the individual items on the SWBQ and the two outcome measures of relationship and helpfulness. If individual items were valid measures of the behavior, one would expect to find correlations between the items and the outcomes. It should be noted that lack of correlation between an item and the outcome measures does not necessarily mean that the item lacks validity.

It is conceivable that many of these behaviors contribute to an overall pattern of effectiveness without necessarily having an individually high correlation with the outcome measures. A measure of validity might be inferred if items on this questionnaire that were highly correlated with relationship and helpfulness were similar to those identified as significant behaviors in other studies using other instruments.

Table 2.2 lists those behaviors that achieved significant levels of correlation. While all behaviors significant at the .05 levels are listed, only those with correlations over .30 should be considered as important measures of association.[27] With this in mind, we find that the skills of "sharing personal thoughts and feelings," "understanding the client's feelings," and "putting the client's feelings into words" are strongly associated with both relationship and helpfulness. These are the skills of self-disclosure and empathy that were identified in the earlier review of the literature as associated with effective helping in a number of studies.[28]

TABLE 2.2
Correlations Between Worker's Behaviors And Relationship/Helpfulness

Relationship		Helpfulness	
Item	r	Item	r
Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings	.45	Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings	.47
Understanding the Client's Feelings	.41	Understanding the Client's Feelings	.46
Clarifying Role	.34	Supporting the Client in Taboo Areas	.33
Displaying Feelings Openly	.33	Putting the Client's Feelings into Words	.32
Putting the Client's Feelings into Words	.31	Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose	.31
Providing Data	.30	Partializing the Client's Concerns	.27
Partializing the Client's Concerns	.29	Providing Data	.25
Dealing with the Authority Theme	.26	Clarifying Role	.23
Supporting the Client in Taboo Areas	.24	Reaching for Between Session Data	.21
Reaching for Between Session Data	.23	Displaying Feelings Openly	.21
Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose	.20	Dealing with the Authority Theme	.18

NOTE: All correlations are significant at $p \leqq .05$. The number of workers included in this analysis totalled 88 after workers with less than four returns on either the SWBQ or the Service Satisfaction Questionnaire were dropped, as were workers with no data on certain variables (the normal option with a partial correlation program). The higher the correlation (r) the stronger the association between variables.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Before describing the findings of that part of the major study which identified worker's skill profiles, it is important to acknowledge a number of limitations. First, although the previous section reported on reliability and validity procedures employed in developing the SWBQ, the instrument must be seen as still in an embryonic, developing stage. For example, some items were identified as having more questionable reliability and validity evidence than others. Findings related to these items must be viewed as potentially influenced by instrument error.

A second major limitation resulted from the fact that the study was set in two child welfare agencies. Social worker's skill patterns as well as client perceptions would be influenced seriously by the unique nature of these settings. While I believe some of these findings eventually may generalize to social workers in other settings, this remains to be tested through replication.

Another limitation was related to the type of study employed. This was not an experimental design in which new clients were randomly assigned to various workers. Instead, it was an analysis of the ongoing work in an agency, a study of a process undertaken at a particular point in time. Without random assignment there was no way to determine if clients were selectively assigned to specific workers. These findings may reflect biases in client assignment. For example, the lack of significant differences in the practice profiles of professionally trained and untrained workers, described later in this chapter, may reflect a bias in the assignment of more difficult cases to trained workers. While supervisors in the agency reported that this was not the case and that assignment usually was dictated by who had the smallest caseload, only random assignment would eliminate this threat to validity. The data reported in this chapter are essentially a by-product of a larger study and the design would have been quite different if the question of the impact of professional training had been under study.

Other limitations included the fact that respondents were self-selected. That is, a bias could exist in the sample with certain groups of clients systematically excluding themselves. For example, I believe that clients contesting agency decisions were less-inclined to respond and that the sample was mellowed by the lower number of the more angry clients. A large number of foster parents responded to the questionnaire, which biased the returns. Exclusions of workers with less than four questionnaire returns also may have had an impact, since there was some evidence that workers excluded for this reason tended to have more negative responses.

These limitations should be kept in mind as the findings are presented. To assist the reader in judging the findings, Table 2.3 provides a description of the worker population, and Table 2.4 describes the respondent population.

WORKERS' SKILL PROFILES

By combining workers in various groups and by computing average scores for each behavior, profiles of sets of workers can be drawn and compared. In this section, profiles are presented for the following groups: the average worker; trained and untrained workers; trained workers with up to three years of agency experience and with

TABLE 2.3
Worker Sample (n = 118)

Variables[a]	n
Sex	
Male	20 (17%)
Female	98 (83%)
Language Spoken	
English	105 (89%)
French	13 (11%)
Agency Department	
Family Services	42 (35%)
Children's Services	52 (45%)
Unmarried Mothers	11 (9%)
Adoption	13 (11%)
Education	
No Social Work Education	
High School	3 (3%)
BA	19 (16%)
Other	24 (20%)
Social Work Education	
Jr. College	14 (12%)
BSW	18 (15%)
MSW	40 (34%)
Total Social Service Work Experience	
Low (up to 3 years)	44 (37%)
Medium (3 to 9 years)	48 (41%)
High (over 10 years)	26 (22%)

[a] See the complete study for a discussion of the impact of these variables on the results.

different levels of preparation (Junior College, BSW, and MSW); and trained BSW and MSW workers with four to nine years of agency experience. Examples of the questions discussed are: What is the order in which skills are developed by workers? What difference does professional training appear to make in the development of skill? The implications of the findings for professional schools and agency training programs also are discussed.

The Average Worker in the Study

Table 2.5 provides a behavior profile of the average worker in the study. The specific helping skills have been listed and grouped together according to the discussion in Chapter One. For example, the first five are general or sessional contracting skills. The groupings

TABLE 2.4
Respondent Sample (n = 1,784)

Variables[a]	n
Category	
Natural Parents	417 (23%)
Foster Parents	596 (33%)
Adolescents (over 14)	332 (19%)
Unmarried Mothers	133 (8%)
Adoptive Parents	304 (17%)
Missing Data	2 (0%)
Education	
Grade 13 or Less	1,250 (70%)
Some College	179 (10%)
College Graduate	158 (9%)
Other	95 (5%)
No Data	102 (6%)
Age	
Below 14	70 (4%)
15 – 25	471 (27%)
26 – 35	505 (28%)
36 – 45	345 (19%)
Over 46	328 (18%)
No Data	65 (4%)
Duration of Contact with Worker	
2 Months or Less	226 (13%)
3 to 11 Months	808 (45%)
1 to 2 Years	362 (20%)
Over 2 Years	299 (17%)
No Data	89 (5%)

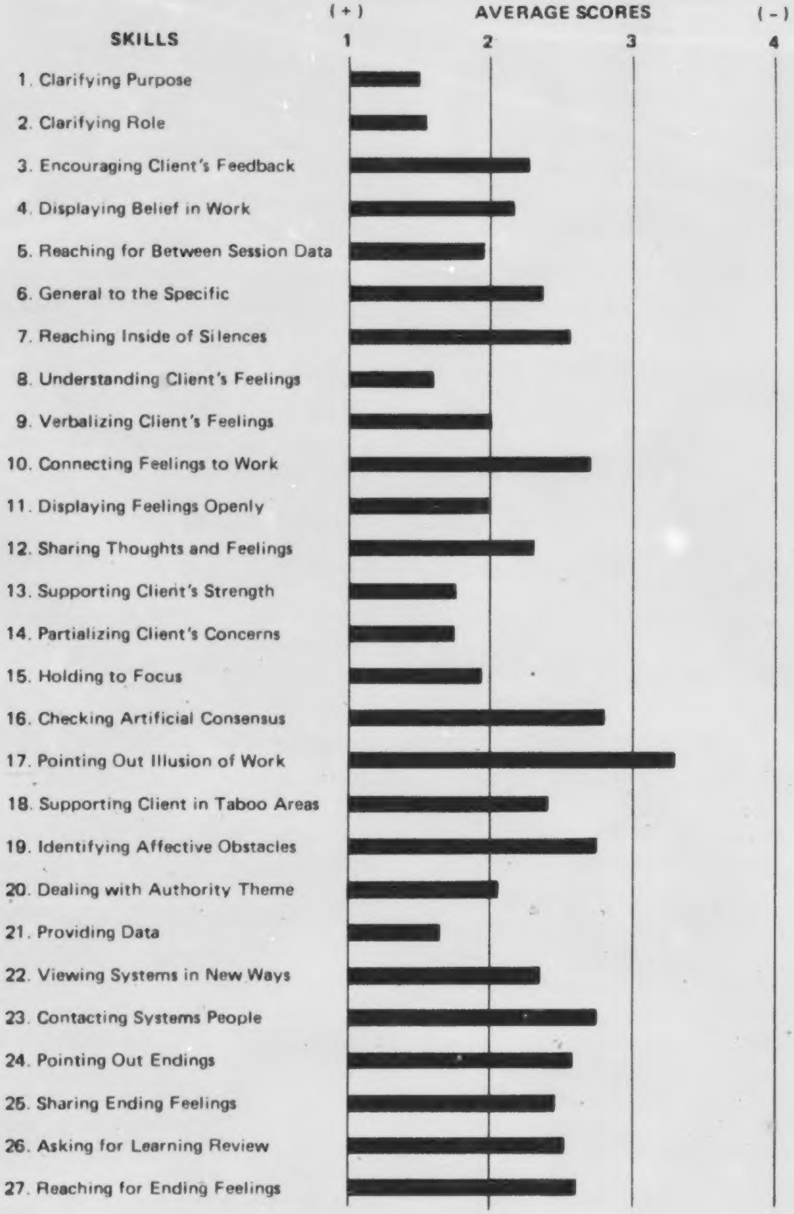
[a] See the complete study for an analysis of the impact of these variables on the results.

that follow are elaborating, empathy, displaying worker's feelings, the demand for work, identifying obstacles, providing data, systems work, and endings.

The numbers at the top of the table provide a scale for determining the average scores for a particular skill. The scale begins with 1, a positive score, and then increases to 4, a negative score. For example, the average score for the clarifying purpose skill was 1.5. It is possible to examine individual average scores for each item, groupings of scores, or the overall profile.

It is interesting to examine these scores against the backdrop of the normal worker's skill development patterns. Since it is an average profile, it includes workers with a wide range of experience and training. One would expect the variations to reflect the degree of difficulty and sophistication associated with some skills as compared to

TABLE 2.5
Skill Profile of the Average Worker in the Study (N = 116)



others. Skills that generally are obtained in the beginning of professional development should be found on the high-use (left-hand) side of the graph. This analysis will draw on the researcher's perceptions of normative skill development patterns that have been obtained from teaching and agency training consultation experience. The patterns are described in terms of average student development over a two-year training program. It assumes direct practice field experience with regular instruction focusing on skill development. This instructional process incorporates consistent direct examination of student practice efforts using process recordings, audiotapes, or videotapes.

The average worker appears to be effective at clarifying purpose and clarifying role but less inclined to encourage client feedback on contract, to demonstrate belief in work, or to carry out sessional contracting behaviors. Early in their development, students have to address themselves to issues associated with contracting — particularly developing the ability to say who they are and what they do. As they struggle to develop a sense of professional identify, which is not dependent on the use of jargon, they begin to develop a mechanical understanding and some sophistication at verbalizing purpose and role. Because these skills are not really internalized — that is, students can say what they do but they have no ability to implement the role — their uncertainty is revealed in the lack of attention to client feedback on contract and in their minimal efforts to check out the client's perception of urgency at the start of each session. It is not until they begin to experience the role in practice that the notion of contracting becomes truly incorporated in their work. It is often at the beginning of the second year of fieldwork, when students are faced with a new setting and a new set of clients, that they are able to understand clearly the power of the contracting idea.

Lack of clarity of role and uncertainty about competency also are reflected in the elaborating behavior scores for the average worker. Students will develop the ability to contract with clients but they are not sure what to do when clients express their concerns. The idea of helping clients discuss a specific interaction as a way of work does not become clear until the second semester. Thus when a natural parent makes a general comment about the problems of parenting, students often will empathize and offer their general reactions, but not draw out the details of the present problem. This reflects, in part, the student's lack of certainty about what he or she would do if the client would begin to relate details.

The skill of reaching inside of silences is used less often than moving from the general to the specific. Silences speak powerfully to workers. They usually are interpreted to mean: "something is going wrong in the interview, and it's my fault." Because of the negative connotation, students usually avoid silences by changing the subject or asking questions. It is only late in the first year of training that they begin to develop enough confidence to reach for the negatives which they fear lie behind the silences. In addition, students often sense the powerful feelings associated with silences. Until they develop comfort with their own affective reactions, they will avoid and deflect the unsurfaced feelings.

The scores of the next three skills on the worker profile match exactly the observed phases in which students learn the empathy skills. First, students begin to understand the existence of affect and its importance. This is reflected in their beginning efforts, usually in the middle of the first semester, to acknowledge directly the feelings expressed by clients. First efforts often are clumsy and artificial, but as students acquire more experience they are able to feel genuine empathy and become more skilled at expressing it directly.

As students become increasingly attuned to their clients, they will experience not only the expressed feelings, but also those that are too difficult to discuss openly. With confidence developing in their beginning skills in the second semester, students will begin to risk their affective reactions before clients articulate their feelings. This will be true for most areas except those dealing with strongly taboo subjects and feelings related to the authority theme (worker-client relationship). The confidence required to deal with tough feelings and negative feedback often does not develop until the second year of training.

The third skill — connecting feelings to work — is closely connected to the development of the students' sense of function and purpose. While they consistently begin to empathize, articulate client feelings, and help clients tell their story, students are not sure of what to do with the feelings once they are expressed. As the sense of function and purpose becomes more internalized — a development often noted in the second semester of the first year — students begin to make their first efforts to link how the client feels with what the client does. This feeling-doing connection becomes more important as students understand that it is the ambivalence of the feelings expressed by clients that makes it difficult for them to take the steps required in their own interest. The use of this skill becomes more apparent in the second year, as the students' sense of purpose and function is internalized more clearly.

The next skills — displaying feelings openly and sharing personal thoughts and feelings — are difficult for students to develop. Factors that block a student's ability to express feelings spontaneously include the general societal injunctions, the student's perception of "professional self" as separate from "personal self," and his or her fear of making a mistake. It is usually middle to late first semester before students begin to feel free enough to risk their feelings, and even then, only some feelings. For the more taboo feelings such as anger, it is not unusual for students to wait until the second semester.

The next group of behaviors, representing one form of demand for work, clearly reflect the difficulty experienced by workers in being direct and assertive with clients. Skills of partializing client's concerns and of holding to focus come early in development (the second semester of the first year), but direct attention to process problems is seen as being too risky. The development of these skills often is delayed until the end of the second year, and sometimes well into the beginning of professional experience.

Students are anxious for some sense of success, and when a client appears to be moving in a positive direction, the last thing they want to do is to reach for potential hidden ambivalence. The students' fear is that reaching for the ambivalence will create the problem. Even though they may sense its existence, they hope the client will overcome the feelings. After the student experiences examples in which the client goes along easily in the interview and does not follow through, the need to explore ambivalence becomes apparent.

The skills related to dealing with obstacles, such as giving support in taboo areas, identifying affective obstacles, and dealing with the authority theme, are all second-level skills. This is reflected in the average worker profile. Students' increased awareness of the importance and naturalness of obstacles allows them to begin to explore these late in the second semester. As students better understand their own feelings, they find it easier to explore the client's feelings. As their own resistance to work decreases, the client's resistance represented by the emergence of obstacles becomes less threatening. As they become more comfortable with their status as learners no longer feeling the need to be perfect at all times, they become more open to client feedback.

The score for providing data indicates that this skill is used extensively. This probably reflects the comfort that workers feel with this part of their role. In fact, the model of a worker with an answer or solution to every problem is part of the student's initial sense of function. As students begin to sense an interactive role of which providing data is only one part, they begin to provide data in a different context. The relief felt by students late in the first semester when they begin to realize that it is not necessary to have all the answers, signals an important turning point in their professional development.

The two systems-related behavior scores reflect problems in the workers' sense of function. Students are anxious to be helpful in their first efforts and desire whenever possible to "do for" their clients. For example, if a client has a problem with a systems person (teacher, doctor, etc.), the student often will intervene on behalf of the client. This is attempted even in those cases where the problem is a broken line of communication between the client and the systems person. As the students' sense of "doing with" the client develops, they begin to increase demands on clients to participate in negotiating their own systems.

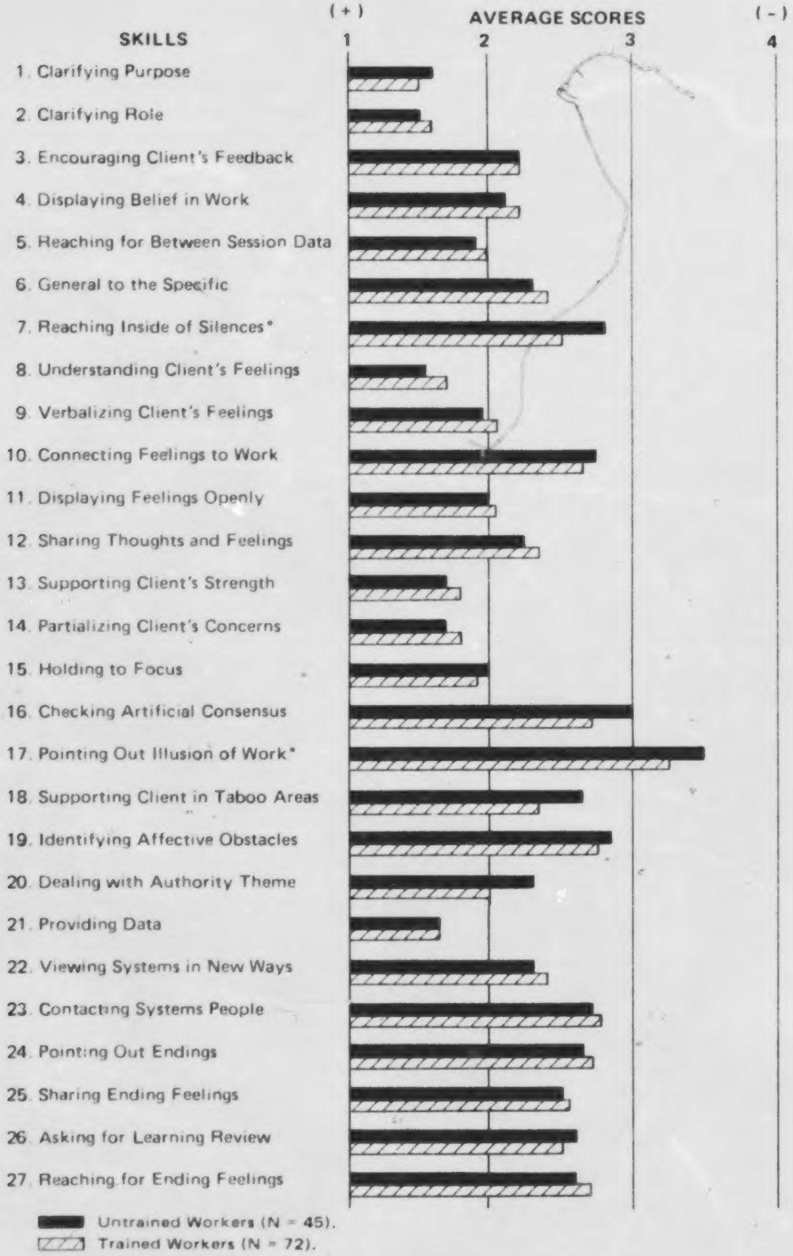
The need for the skill of viewing systems people in new ways does not become clear to students until well into the second semester. Their first sense of identification is with their client and they often will accept, at face value, the stereotype of the systems person (father, teacher, doctor, etc.) exactly as presented. The stereotype often fits their own bias. The student's ability to tolerate deviant behavior on the part of systems people often is very low. The same student who has learned to appreciate client defenses, to understand the hidden language of communication, and to tolerate deviant behavior on the part of clients and to recognize it as a message, refuses to see systems people in the same way. If the systems person can be viewed as a stereotype, then the student will not have to deal with him or her. Developing the ability to see systems people as human beings with feelings (often ambivalent ones) and potential for change comes slowly and often is not experienced until the second year of training. When students begin to feel more secure themselves, more at ease with their own role and less threatened by the authority of others, they will begin to reach for and discover the human qualities of the systems people their clients must deal with.

Finally, the ending skill group represents an unusual tail on the bottom of the graph. This reflects the dichotomized answers of yes (2) and no (3) offered on the questionnaire. The scores seem to indicate that workers are evenly divided in the use of the skills related to the ending process. For students, who often experience guilt at not having known enough to help their clients, ending feelings and issues often are ignored. Since most of their endings are associated with the termination of the school year, the way in which a field instructor or classroom teacher models the ending skills with the student may have a powerful impact on the student's ability to employ these skills with clients.

Trained and Untrained Workers

Workers were divided into two groups, one of 45 untrained workers and the other of 72 trained workers. Trained workers included graduates with master of social work degrees, bachelor of social work degrees, and social work junior college degrees. Table 2.6

TABLE 2.6
Skill Profiles: Untrained and Trained Workers



*Significant Differences (P = .05)

shows the profiles of these two groups.[29] Significant differences between the groups were found for only two of the skills.[30] Trained workers tended to reach inside of silences (item 7) more often than untrained workers ($p \leqq .02$), and they challenged the illusion of work (item 17) more often than untrained workers ($p \leqq .02$). Generally, the lack of difference on other skills was surprising since it was expected that professional training would influence worker skill development.

Since the trained worker group consisted of three levels of training, one explanation for this finding was that differences between the skill profiles were being lost in the analysis. In addition, 75 percent of the trained workers were in their first three years of work at the agency and lack of experience might have offset their training. Given these possibilities, profiles for each level of training were generated while controlling for agency work experience.

Junior College, BSW, and MSW Workers Compared

There were 54 trained workers with up to three years of agency experience. Thirteen were junior college social work graduates, 11 had BSW degrees, and 30 had obtained their MSW degrees. Table 2.7 provides the profiles for these three groups of workers. Analysis of the significance of differences between groups (t-tests) indicated that junior college graduates obtained more positive scores on item 2, clarification of role, than BSW workers ($p \leqq .01$) and MSW workers ($p \leqq .002$). In addition, they received more positive scores for item 3, encouraging feedback on the contract, than MSW workers ($p \leqq .05$), as well as on item 12, the skill of sharing their own feelings, although the probability level was slightly higher than the accepted level ($p \leqq .06$).

BSW workers were scored more positively on item 9, the skill of verbalizing the client's feelings, than MSW workers ($p \leqq .02$). MSW workers received more positive scores on item 15, the skill of holding to focus, than did junior college graduates ($p \leqq .05$).

Table 2.8 examines the profiles of workers in the medium agency experience group (three to nine years). In this sample, there were five BSW workers and eight MSW workers. The one junior college trained worker in this group was dropped for reasons of reliability and confidentiality. With a sample this small, these findings must be viewed with tentativeness.

With this limitation in mind, we find that the MSW workers were scored more positively than the BSW workers on three skills: item 5, reaching for between session data ($p \leqq .05$); item 12, sharing personal thoughts and feelings ($p \leqq .0001$); and item 18, supporting

TABLE 2.7

Skill Profiles: Social Work Junior College, BSW and MSW Workers (Up to 3 Years Agency Experience)

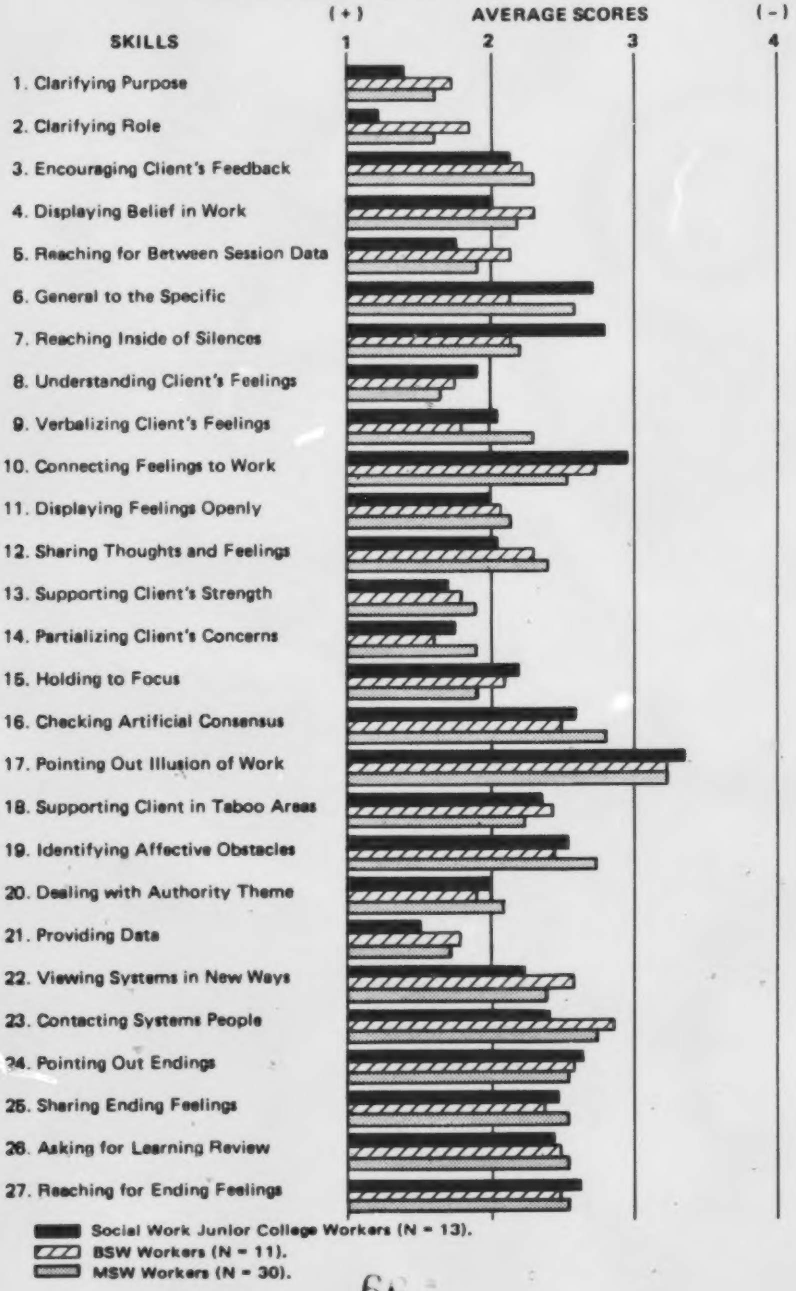
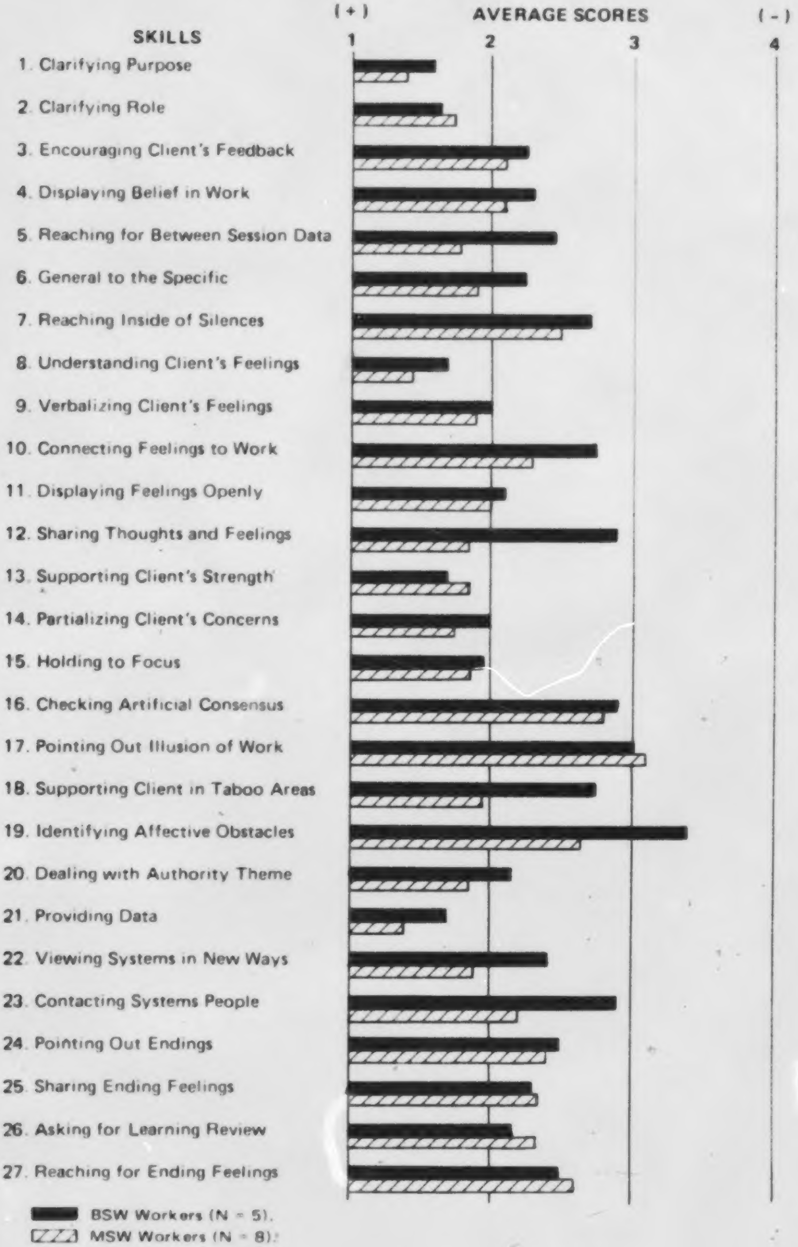


TABLE 2.8
Skill Profiles: BSW and MSW Workers
(3-9 Years Agency Experience)



client in taboo areas ($p \leqq .06$).

There are a number of reasons that interpretations must be limited when referring to this data. The most important is that the sample contains workers who were employed in child welfare agencies. The impact of selectivity on the workers involved, as well as the impact of the setting on the way in which clients responded, are serious. When obtaining data on agency and total work experience, no effort was made to determine if work experience preceeded or followed professional training. Many workers use a leave of absence from their agency position to return to school for professional training. Would the timing of professional training have an impact on skill development? The list of questions is a long one. This was not a study of the impact of professional training, and therefore the design was not appropriate for exploring these issues. However, the findings do argue for the importance of such a study.

EMPLOYING CLIENT FEEDBACK DATA

Since the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire was designed as a general instrument adaptable for various categories of clients, specialized versions could be created to fit a range of respondents. Development of this questionnaire is still in progress, and newer versions, with modifications reflecting the reliability and validity concerns associated with some of the items, will need to be developed for the child welfare client population as well as for other practice areas. Additional reliability and validity procedures, such as cross validation with other scales measuring some of the dimensions included on this questionnaire, will help strengthen the revised instrument and increase our confidence in its use. The advantage of developing a standardized questionnaire that is easily adaptable to a range of populations is that the same skills can be measured in a range of situations in which social workers practice.

These questionnaires then could be used for a number of purposes. First, they could be used as feedback instruments. Schools could arrange to administer them periodically to clients seen by students. Once a computer program for analyzing data was designed, it would be possible to develop an ongoing procedure for distributing forms, analyzing returns, and providing feedback to students and instructors. A second use for such an instrument might be in the formulation of models of skill development that would provide accurate guidelines for evaluating student progress over semesters. It is important to note that extensive testing and evaluation of such an instrument would be required before it could be considered useful in evaluation. Early versions could be used by field instructors, for example, to guide their teaching focus and to identify problem areas in skill development. This instrument could be used in addition to traditional sources of feedback (process records, audiotapes, or videotapes of practice, etc.).

A third use could be found in program development. As different professional levels were developed (e.g., BSW or MSW), data on student skill levels obtained from a number of schools could provide outcome data for testing the impact of changes. Ongoing empirical research, using a social work oriented instrument, could be introduced into program development. With a means for obtaining standardized measurements of student skill levels, schools would have a better sense of what to expect from students entering advanced levels of training who had undergone their preliminary work at other schools.

The implications for development of certification or registration procedures by professional or governmental organizations also are evident. This author, for example, has developed a shortened, modified version of this questionnaire which incorporates skills that were found to be important in this research as well as in the research of related disciplines. A proposal for employing the instrument with social workers in the human resources field on a province-wide basis may provide the experience for eventual incorporation of such a procedure (along with others measuring knowledge, values, etc.) into a registration act dealing with certification of beginning competency to practice. This step would be dependent, of course, on obtaining evidence of reliability and validity as well as on our ability to achieve consensus on the identification of accepted core skills for social workers.

Finally, a key benefit of using a questionnaire for these purposes would be that students would become accustomed to the idea of receiving specific feedback on their use of skills. Students who are trained this way may be less defensive and therefore more effective in their beginning practice. They will have experienced an important demonstration of how professionals can learn from their own clients if they are prepared to listen.

NOTES

1. The study was funded by the Welfare Grants Directorate of Health and Welfare Canada. A full report of the study by this author is entitled: *A Study of the Helping Process* (Vancouver, B.C.: School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1977). The study also is described in a text by this author entitled, *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups* (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1979). A series of six videotaped programs entitled *The Helping Process in Social Work: Theory, Practice and Research*, also describes the practice model, the research design, and the results of the study (Montreal: Instructional Communications Centre, McGill University, 1976).

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25. The development and testing of this second questionnaire is described in the full research report. Reliability and validity studies, similar to the ones conducted for the SWBQ, were carried out with similar results for the overall questionnaire and these two key items. Test-retest correlations (r) were: relationship = .68 and helpfulness = .56.
26. Nie et al., *op. cit.*
27. When the r score is squared $(r)^2$ the result is the percentage of variance accounted for in the second variable. Thus Sharing Personal Thoughts and Feelings accounts for 20 percent of the change in relationship $(.45)^2$, while Encouraging the Client's Feedback on Purpose accounts for only 4 percent $(.20)^2$.
28. Carkhuff, *op. cit.*
29. The impact of education, years of experience, and other worker-related variables on overall scores for skill, relationship, and helpfulness were explored in detail in the major study. The outcome of the analysis was that professional training did not relate to any of the three variables, with the exception of having a positive impact on helpfulness for trained workers in the three- to nine-year experience group.
30. T-tests were conducted to determine the significance of differences using the program in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences package. F tests of sample variance were used to determine if pooled variance or separate variance estimates were used. Pooled variances were used when the probability for F was greater than .05.

3

[illegible] HELPING SKILLS USING AN OBSERVATION SYSTEM

A category observation system provides a means for making systematic observations of interactions between workers and clients. In its simplest form, a category is created by grouping together a number of associated behaviors and providing the grouping with a title and number.

For example, all worker behaviors that deal with client feelings could be called empathic skills. Whenever an observer notices one of these behaviors (while reviewing written process recordings, audiotapes, videotapes, or during live observations) the number representing this category of behavior can be scored. At the end of an interview one thus will have a numerical record of the worker's empathic moves.

A system for analyzing individual and group practice was developed for a validity study of the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire. Raters, some of whom were social work students, felt that learning to use the system and then observing tapes was one of the most important learning experiences in their program. They felt that their ability to analyze practice had greatly increased. This had a powerful impact on their ability to put their insights into action with clients.

With the increase in the use of audio and video recordings of student practice or role play, it is important to develop systems that train students to see subtle movements and patterns. Students can use these skills for scoring their own tapes or for joint viewing and rating of selected tapes. Some of my most productive discussions with student assistants emerged during the rater training program. A secondary impact was on the students' view of the research process. They were intrigued with a research methodology that related directly to their learning needs.

The rest of this chapter describes the system, giving the analysis of over 120 hours of individual and group practice. These findings are presented as illustrations of formats for presenting data and as examples of how returns may be analyzed. Computer programs were developed for the analysis of the results (see Appendix B). It is possible, however, for students to hand tally their own ratings for single sessions.

CATEGORY OBSERVATION SYSTEMS

There are many types of category observation systems available to record interactive behavior. One of the best known was developed by Bales and is entitled the Interactive Process Analysis.[1] Bales was interested in group leadership and studied numerous laboratory groups in order to identify styles of leadership skill. Maas led an early social work project to categorize interaction in groups as he examined the impact of a number of variables (reference group, primary group, and bio-psychological factors) on the worker-client interaction.[2] Hollis was another social work theoretician who empirically examined practice using a category system.[3]

While these and other attempts have been made in social work, the major work in developing category systems is found in the field of education. In six volumes entitled *Mirrors for Behavior*, Simon and Boyer reviewed over 50 different educational systems that appeared during the 1960s.[4] One of these systems was developed by Ned Flanders. The system described in this chapter is indebted to Flander's work in terms of its structure and the format for reporting results. However the theoretical constructs and the content of the categories under analysis are drawn from the model described in Chapter One.

THE OBSERVATION SYSTEM DESCRIBED

The system developed for this project was named the Social Work Interaction Analysis Categories. Table 3.1 lists the system's 13 categories of behavior. The reader will note that the first 11 categories apply to individual or group (including family) sessions. The

TABLE 3.1
Social Work Interaction Analysis Categories[a]

1. Clarifies Purpose
2. Encourages Elaboration of Theme of Concern
3. Reaches for, Accepts, and Offers Feelings
4. Makes a Demand for Work
5. Offers Data
6. Identifies Obstacles to Productive Work
7. Directs Flow of Work Away from the Theme of Concern
8. Criticizes Behavior or Feelings
9. Provides Solutions
10. Remains Silent in Response to Silence
11. Listens While the Client Talks
12. Encourages Intragroup (Family) Member Communication
13. Listens While Group (Family) Members Talk to Each Other

[a] Categories 12 and 13 apply only to group and family contacts.

last 2 would be used only when working with families or groups. The number next to each category is recorded when the appropriate behavior is observed.

The descriptions that follow provide an elaboration on the content of each category.[5] The reader will note some differences between this system and the skill categories developed in the earlier section of this book. In explanation I may remark that this system was developed in the first year of the research project as a validity subdesign.

1. *Clarifies Purpose* – statements designed to establish a working contract reflecting the common ground between the needs of the client and the service of the agency. Includes worker's stating of purpose; request for client's view of purpose; pointing out an unclear contract; guarding the contract; renegotiation of contract; and clarification of worker's role. This category includes efforts at sessional contracting, including checking concerns at the start of the session and expressing interest in between session events.
2. *Encourages Elaboration of Theme of Concern* – statements, questions, or nonverbal communication (e.g., nodding the head) designed to encourage specific elaboration of a theme directly or indirectly offered by the client. Includes requesting elaboration; moving from general concerns to specific problems; direct-

ly raising taboo subjects; risking hunches about themes based on indirect cues; exploring silences; and encouraging and crediting productive work patterns.

3. *Reaches for, Accepts, and Offers Feelings* — statements that deal with the client's or worker's feelings at the moment, in past situations, or in anticipation of a future event. Includes requests for the affective component of themes; verbal or nonverbal acceptance of feelings (including negative feelings); verbalizing the affect for the client; reaching for opposite feelings; reaching for hidden negatives behind artificial agreements; expression of the worker's affect, both positive and negative; verbalizing ambivalences; dealing with both positive and negative feelings toward the worker; reaching for ending feelings; connecting feelings and specific work; and expressions of belief in the client's strength.

4. *Makes a Demand for Work* — statements that place a demand on clients to invest themselves with energy and feeling in dealing with specific components of the work. Includes insisting on focus and demand for risking, partializing global concerns into specific issues, and pointing out the illusion of work.

5. *Offers Data* — contributing data, ideas, facts, and value concepts that are not available to clients and that may prove useful to them in attempting to cope with the tasks upon which they are working at the moment. Data must be offered in a manner that allows for challenge and rejection if not seen as useful. Includes verbalizing and clarifying connections between client and system and helping clients understand their interaction in new ways.

6. *Identifies Obstacles to Productive Work* — statements that identify blocks to work and explore them when required (e.g., taboos).

7. *Directs Flow of Work Away from the Theme of Concern* — statements or questions that initiate work themes unrelated to the client's own tasks or attempts to shift attention away from expressed work themes. Includes not checking for concerns at the start of the session; ignoring life events between sessions; beginning sessions by initiating work themes; raising new work themes in response to silences or indications of resistance; directing discussion to issues not included in the open working contract; displaying disinterest in themes raised; changing subjects to worker's sense of urgency; and moving to fill silences without exploring them.

8. *Criticizes Behavior or Feelings* — statements, questions, or

nonverbal reactions that indicate a direct or indirect negative judgment of behavior or feelings (except when criticizing the way of working as in the "demand for work"). Includes statements that make negative judgments on the answers resulting from the work; indications of disapproval with life styles; statements that prevent expression of risky ideas about the work or the relationship with the worker; and statements critical of systems people behavior that do not reach past surface responses.

9. *Provides Solutions* — statements, questions, or nonverbal responses that attempt directly or indirectly to influence decisions concerning specific problems or try to provide "quick" answers. Includes presenting data not relevant to the immediate concern; presenting data in a way that encourages acceptance of the worker's view *because* of his or her "expertise"; using indirect means to influence a decision; and providing answers while ignoring ambivalences.

10. *Remains Silent in Response to Silence* — pauses and short periods of silence.

11. *Listens While the Client Talks* — workers listen in response to talk directed toward them.

12. *Encourages Intra-Group (Family) Member Communication* — statements, questions, or nonverbal communication specifically designed to encourage group (or family) members to listen to each other. Includes efforts to point out similar concerns and feelings; the identification and verbalizing of problems in the way in which group (or family) members work with each other; and statements designed to engage group (or family) members in working on an individual member's concern.

13. *Listens While Group (Family) Members Talk to Each Other* — the worker listens in response to the talk of group (or family) members directed toward each other.

A content review of each category reveals the problems involved in the creation of mutually exclusive groupings. Some behaviors fit into a number of categories. In addition, it can be difficult to distinguish between closely related behaviors. The three raters employed by the project, the project director, and other project staff members used weekly meetings to revise the system and to develop a set of scoring rules and conventions. These can be found in Appendix B in the form of a manual for raters. The rules provided a common guideline on the scoring procedures and the conventions were simply agreements on how to score certain difficult interactions.

OBSERVATION PROCEDURE

The observation and scoring were carried out in two steps. In the first, the rater previewed the entire videotape without scoring behaviors. The rater was asked to view the opening of the session with the following question in mind: "What themes of concern does the client seem to be directly or indirectly raising?" The underlying assumption was that the client would set the stage for the work of the session. As the rater viewed the tape, he or she could make a general judgment of whether or not the worker was attempting to help the client elaborate his or her theme of concern, or ignoring the client's agenda and introducing his or her own. The obvious underlying theoretical bias of this system is an interactional approach in which the worker's response is keyed to the sense of urgency expressed by the client.

The rater kept notes on his or her own understanding of the client's direct or indirect themes of concern. The rater also noted the sections of videotape in which the worker appeared to be responding to the client's concerns ("in mode") or leading the client to work on his or her own agenda ("out of mode"). Once a worker was in mode it would require clear evidence of a shift before the observer would mark a segment of tape as out of mode. The reverse also was true. The result of this mapping procedure was a general summary of the client's expressed concerns and an identification of work segments in which a worker appeared to be responsive (in mode) or leading away (out of mode). All sessions observed indicated some periods of in-mode and out-of-mode behaviors. If a worker initiated a concern *and* the client responded to it as if it were his or her own, the rater would consider the worker in mode.

This preview would then be used by the rater in his or her second viewing of the tape. The previewing allowed the observer to introduce the interactive element by predetermining whether he or she would score in-mode categories (1-6, 12) or out-of-mode categories (7-9) during each segment of tape. For example, a worker's question designed to encourage a client to elaborate a theme of concern (in mode) would be scored a 2, while a worker's question that seemed to ignore the client's agenda (out of mode) would be scored a 7.

In another example, a worker providing data related to a concern raised by a client would be scored a 5, while a worker sharing data unrelated to any client theme would be scored a 7 (diverting the client away from the theme of concern).[6]

A number would be entered for every intervention as often as one occurred. For example:

		Category Scored
Client:	My daughter was hurt.	11
Worker:	When?	2
Client:	Yesterday.	11
Worker:	Hurt badly?	2

If a specific category continued, for example a client's lengthy description of a concern, raters would enter a score *at least every three seconds.* In this way, no more than three seconds would pass without an entry of a score (one minute of worker explanation of data related to a client's concern would appear as approximately 20 consecutive 5s; 15 seconds of silence would appear as approximately 5 consecutive 10s). For a one-hour session an observer might record an average of 1,200 discrete entries.

RATER TRAINING AND RELIABILITY

Three raters were involved in the analysis of videotapes. Two were trained social workers who had participated in classes taught by the researcher, and the third was a nonprofessional (this rater audited a practice class taught by the researcher during the year of this subdesign).

Raters were introduced to the categories and the general scoring procedures, and were then asked to memorize the system. A set of cards with the categories on one side and the numbers on the other was a useful aid in this process. Raters practiced moving from behavior to category number since that was the order in the rating process. After the categories were memorized, the training moved to the analysis of written protocols of individual and group sessions. The purpose of this exercise was to develop the raters' ability to determine the appropriate category.

An example of an individual protocol follows. The numbers in parentheses represent the points the raters were to describe, with the category number in the right column. Category numbers have been entered to illustrate the scoring process. It should be pointed out, however, that these numbers represent a judgment, not the correct category. The reader could well decide to enter different numbers. The first page of a three-page protocol is reproduced. The recorded categories indicate that the worker was judged to be in mode (responding to the client) until entry 15, and out of mode (moving away from the client) after that. A brief analysis follows the protocol.

		Category Scored
W:	You said you called me at noon. Why? (1)	1
C:	Yes, I called you to tell you I'd been feeling great because I knew you were concerned. (Client had called worker at 3:00 a.m. the previous morning.) (2)	11
W:	Well, what happened? (3)	2
C:	Went for a beer. (4)	11
W:	Looks like you went for more than one. (5)	2
C:	I've had more than one. Oh, I did washing, and then I went for a beer. (6)	11
W:	Do you feel worse today than yesterday? (7)	3
C:	No, I feel better today. (8)	11
W:	You weren't drunk yesterday when you saw me. (9)	4
C:	No, and I'm not drunk today. (10)	11
W:	Well you're getting there. (11)	4
C:	Oh, yah, I'm on my way. (12)	11
W:	Why weren't you that way yesterday, and you are today? (13)	2
C:	Because I saw my son (pause, tears) I want my son back. I don't care whether I prostitute. I want my son. (14)	11
W:	There's never been any question that you didn't prostitute. (15)	7
C:	Maybe I don't do right by him, I don't know. I want him, I need him. It's not the extra money it puts in my hands. I want him. (16)	11
W:	What do you mean that you don't do right by him? (17)	7
C:	I'll be honest with you, I don't give a shit what I do. I want my son. (18)	11
W:	Did I ever tell you you weren't getting him back? (19)	7
C:	No, nobody could tell me that. (20)	11
W:	Have I ever tried to tell you that? (21)	7
C:	No, I want him. If I don't get him, I'll break. I'm getting to the point where I'm breaking. (22)	11

W: Okay, June, why don't we go over what happened when you came to the office that day and asked me to place Billy. (23) 7

The worker's first move (1) was judged to be sessional contracting. The client responded by saying "I'd been feeling great," but the worker asks for elaboration (3). To the worker, this comment may have seemed to be an example of a client raising a concern indirectly through the use of an opposite statement. The worker's request for feelings (7) is scored as an empathic response. When the client denies feeling worse, the worker makes a demand for work (9) by pointing out that the client is inebriated. This time the elaboration combined with the demand for work helped the client move quickly to the difficult feelings associated with seeing her son (14). It is at this point that the worker was judged to be shifting out of mode since she appeared to move away from the painful offering of the client and began to defend herself. For this segment of the protocol, all entries for the worker were drawn from categories 7 (directs flow of work away from the theme of concern), 8 (criticizes behavior or feelings), or 9 (provides solutions).

A number of individual and group protocols were completed separately by each rater and the research director. Group sessions were held and the similarities and differences in the ratings were noted. As this process continued, a common frame of reference was constructed and important areas for rules and conventions identified. The process was repeated with a sample of individual and group videotapes over a period of four weeks. The training process was lengthened since the rules and conventions were developed as the training proceeded.

There is a great deal of subjective decision making involved in rating a videotape of practice. Before the trained raters could proceed to the analysis of tapes for the study, two tests were necessary to determine how reliable their judgments would be. The first involved having each rater independently rate a specific tape, and then rate the same tape again one week later. The percentages of each category scored on each rating were compared. This is similar to the test-retest procedures for determining stability described in Chapter Two. The average percentage of agreement reached was 89 percent.

With some assurance that raters were consistent in their judgments, a second procedure was instituted. In this check, interrater reliability was examined by comparing judgments on the same tape of each rater against the others. Raters were considered ready to begin viewing tapes for the project when the average interrater reliability percentage reached 79 percent.[7]

SAMPLE AND METHOD

The practice videotapes were made with the cooperation of the staff at the Children's Service Centre in Montreal. A meeting was held with the staff to invite participation. Eleven workers agreed to assist with the project, which represented about one-third of the total staff. The fact that the worker sample was self-selected is important. The group consisted for the most part of workers who had previously had contact with the research director and therefore felt free to risk. In addition, their willingness to participate indicated a high degree of professional curiosity about practice. All the workers were women, most were professionally trained, and most were in their early years of agency practice. Given the lack of random selection of workers, it is important that the limitations of the data be recognized. It would be inappropriate to generalize to a larger group of workers. However, the findings offer interesting insights that can lead to further study.

ANALYZING THE RESULTS

The results of the ratings were analyzed by computer. A number of operations were performed that yielded a printout which provided information on each session, on combinations of sessions, and on segments of sessions divided according to time (beginning, work, and ending phases). Over 99,500 discrete entries were analyzed. The findings of this aspect of the study are discussed in detail in the full research report.[8]

A sample of the findings is presented in this chapter to illustrate possible formats for organizing data, and ways in which analysis can be used to develop student practice insight. Although a computer was required in the study, all analysis examples could have been calculated by students using hand tally methods. The first set of illustrations explores questions dealing with quantities of behaviors. For example, what was the percentage of use of particular categories? One worker's interview is analyzed in this manner and then compared with a later interview by the same worker. In addition, the results for the total one-to-one sessions (32) and the total group/family sessions (30) are presented. Finally, the division of data into time segments is illustrated.

The second set of findings shifts to another format in which the interaction between behaviors is analyzed. For example, what behaviors tended to follow periods of silence? Who broke the silence, the worker or the client? This form of analysis is illustrated for a single worker. The discussion of each format notes its implications for use in training.

Before proceeding to share these illustrations, a major limitation must be discussed. In the earlier description of the content of the categories, it was noted that the system described differed somewhat from the one that led to these findings. The major differences were in the interpretations of Category One (clarifies purpose) and Category Four (makes a demand for work). Tapes were scored as if sessional contracting behaviors were *not* included in Category One, the rationale being to define more clearly overall contracting behaviors separate from those involved in each session. Sessional contracting behaviors (e.g. checking concerns at the start of a session) were scored as Category Two (encourages elaboration of theme of concern). Since most of the taped sessions were from the work phase, very few Category One scores were noted.

The problem with Category Four behaviors is that only the stronger demands were included. These were interpreted as clear demands for real talk (for example, checking for artificial consensus, not accepting the illusion of work) carrying the sense of overt insistence. The softer demands, including partializing client concerns, holding to focus, moving from the general to the specific, and so on, were included in Category Two. In retrospect, this was a mistake since Category Two behaviors contain elements that would have been more interesting to examine in separate categories. These problems have been corrected in the system, as mentioned earlier. The result of these problems was an artificially low measure of contracting and demand for work behaviors.

THE PRACTICE DESCRIBED

Analysis of an Individual Session

The format for the description of the findings is best described in relation to actual sessions. For this purpose, the third and sixth videotaped sessions of individual work with a natural parent were selected. The client was a single parent with a child in placement. The worker had been seeing her for more than three months. The third taped session was well into the work phase. This particular session can be described best as one in which the worker's agenda involved helping the client gain insight into why she had experienced problems in dealing with her child. The client seemed to have another sense of urgency that the worker did not relate to it in a sustained manner. The interview was characterized by periods of

TABLE 3.2
Interaction Analysis:
Third Taped Interview (Natural Parent) — Analysis Based on 1,619 Discrete Observations

	Category	*Entries*	*Percent of Total*	*Percent of Worker Total*
IN MODE	1. Purpose	0	0	0
	2. Elaboration	241	14.9	37.9
	3. Feelings	15	0.9	2.4
	4. Demand	0	0	0
	5. Data	39	2.4	6.1
	6. Obstacle	0	0	0
OUT OF MODE	7. Directs	240	14.8	37.7
	8. Criticizes	75	4.6	11.8
	9. Provides	26	1.6	4.1
	10. Silence	127	7.8	—
	11. Client Talk	856	52.9	—

Client Talk = 57 percent; In Mode = 46 percent.

client withdrawal, minimal communication, and worker frustration revealed through critical comments.

Table 3.2 describes this interview in the form of an interaction analysis. At the top of the table are the number of discrete rater entries.[9] The categories are listed in the left-hand column, and are divided into in-mode and out-of-mode groupings. The first data column provides the number of entries per category, the second column provides the percentage of the total interaction for each category, and the third column recomputes the percentages of each worker behavior, excluding silence and client talk from the totals. This second computation gives a more accurate reflection of the worker's behavior since the percentage of the total interaction will be affected by how much client talk takes place and by the amount of silence.

Analysis of this session revealed that 37.9 percent of the worker's behavior was directed at helping the client tell her story. Concern with affect was expressed for 2.4 percent, and data shared for 6.1 percent of the behavior. There were no overall contracting efforts, no direct demands for work, and no efforts by the worker to explore obstacles (for example, problems such as not getting through to the client and the client exhibiting many nonverbal cues of anger toward the worker).

Out-of-mode behavior was heavily loaded with such items as the worker directing the client away from her theme of concern 37.7 percent of the time, criticizing the client 11.8 percent of the time (an unusually high level of criticism for this study), and providing easy solutions 4.1 percent of the time. The summary figures at the bottom of the table reveal that the worker was in mode 46 percent of the time and the client spoke 57 percent of the time. This client talk percentage is slightly higher than the Category 11 (client talk) score since periods of silence have been excluded in this calculation. Silences persisted 7.8 percent of the time and a review of the tape revealed they were mostly in response to the worker's criticisms and interpretations.

Table 3.3 provides a contrast by describing the sixth videotape session, which showed increased effort on the part of the worker to deal directly with the client's expressed themes of concern. The client was more actively involved, there were fewer periods of silence,

TABLE 3.3
Interaction Analysis:
Sixth Taped Interview (Natural Parent) —
Analysis Based on 1,490 Discrete Observations

	Category	*Entries*	*Percent of Total*	*Percent of Worker Total*	
				#6	#3
IN MODE	1. Purpose	0	0	0	0
	2. Elaboration	262	17.6	52.8	37.9
	3. Feelings	31	2.1	6.3	2.4
	4. Demand	0	0	0	0
	5. Data	50	3.4	10.1	6.1
	6. Obstacle	0	0	0	0
OUT OF MODE	7. Directs	134	9.0	27.0	37.7
	8. Criticizes	4	0.3	0.8	11.8
	9. Provides	15	1.0	3.0	4.1
	10. Silence	30	2.0	–	–
	11. Client Talk	964	64.7	–	–

Session 6 – Client Talk = 66 percent; In Mode = 69 percent.
Session 3 – Client Talk = 57 percent; In Mode = 46 percent.

and productive work appeared to take place on a number of specific issues related to a change in housing, relationship to the natural father, and a school problem experienced by the client's child.

To aid in the comparison of the two sessions, a fourth column has been added that repeats the percentages of behavior for the third session.

A striking contrast in the elaborating behavior is evident in the fact that the worker's attempt to help the client tell her story constituted 52.8 percent of her interventions. Almost three times as much attention to affect was reported and additional relevant data was provided. A sharp reduction in directing the client away from her concerns was accompanied by a major reduction in critical behavior (down from 11.8 to 0.8 percent). The change in the frequency of silences is reflected in the drop in Category 10 behavior. We see the worker in-mode 69 percent of the time in this session and the client activity up 9 percent.

How should these two sessions be interpreted? Interpretation obviously would depend on the theoretical starting point. From the point of the model presented in this book, the worker would be more effective if her sessions tended to look like the sixth as opposed to the third. It is clear, however, that even this detailed count of behaviors leaves much to be desired. The quality of the affective moves is not clear and no effort is made to match a particular move to a particular client response.

This analysis represents a rough measure of the practice. However, the worker found it helpful. She felt that the printouts were fair characterizations of the two sessions. She had been displeased with the third session and these printouts helped her to understand why. The real power of the system was revealed when the worker reviewed a tape with the categories and the printout in mind. She felt this helped her analyze the process and see things she had not seen earlier. An overall printout including all the worker's six sessions was computed, providing her with an average profile of her sessions that she could compare with the average data for all workers in the study.

Since these data were not gathered as part of a study of effectiveness, no effort was made to link the behavior patterns to outcome measures. These two tables, and the ones to follow, simply describe a picture of the practice interaction for 11 workers in one agency. Since they reflect the theoretical bias of the researcher, certain data are included, while other data — which some may feel is more important — are excluded. Even with these limitations the data provide interesting insights into what might be happening in practice.

Work with Families and Groups (30 sessions)

Table 3.4 provides the results of the analysis of 30 sessions of group and family work. While it is true that there are major differences in work between family groups and peer groups, the common element of more than one client permitted such a grouping in this study. Further differentiation would have been helpful, but the limitations of the design of this part of the study prevented this.

Table 3.4 introduces two new categories, Category 12 (encourages interaction) and Category 13 (interaction). Category 12 behaviors were those that encouraged group members to talk directly to each other, while Category 13 measured units of client talk directed toward other clients. When client talk was directed toward the worker, Category 11 was scored.

TABLE 3.4
Interaction Analysis:
Work with Groups and Families (30 Sessions) —
Analysis Based on 58,675 Discrete Observations

	Category	*Entries*	*Percent of Total*	*Percent of Worker Total*	
				group/family	individual
IN MODE	1. Purpose	116	0.2	0.7	0
	2. Elaboration	5,734	9.8	36.2	37.3
	3. Feelings	839	1.4	5.3	2.3
	4. Demand	0	0	0	0
	5. Data	2,445	4.2	15.5	9.7
	6. Obstacle	32	0.1	0.2	0.1
OUT OF MODE	7. Directs	5,430	9.3	34.3	34.9
	8. Criticizes	197	0.3	1.3	2.7
	9. Provides	274	0.5	1.7	2.1
	10. Silence	664	1.1	4.2	11.1
	11. Client Talk	23,023	39.2	–	–
GROUP/ FAMILY	12. Encourages Interaction	97	0.2	0.6	–
	13. Interaction	19,824	33.8	–	–

Group/Family — Client Talk = 73 percent; In Mode = 62 percent; Intermember Talk = 45 percent.

Individual Work — Client Talk = 61 percent; In Mode = 60 percent.

These additional categories roughly measured the quality of interaction that distinguishes work with groups from work with individuals. A group is seen as a potential "mutual aid system." These categories capture some of this quality and distinguish groupwork from a process of doing "casework in the group." The expression "casework in the group" reflects a procedure through which the worker deals with each member of the group in turn, while the others watch and listen. By separating client talk into two categories, we can compute an intermember talk percentage that tells us what percentage of the total client talk was directed toward other clients.

To aid in comparing the workers' behaviors in groups and families with their behavior with individuals, a fourth column has been added with the percentages from the total work with individuals (32 sessions). There are a number of striking observations in these data; however, since a discussion of these findings would go beyond the scope of this book, readers are referred to the full research report.[10]

The Impact of Time on Practice

Time and the phases of work are central to the theory underlying this research. To gain some insight into the possible effects of time on practice, individual and group session data were divided into even thirds. This was a rough estimation of the beginning, work, and ending phases, since the realities of practice seldom conform to mathematical divisions.

Table 3.5 provides a breakdown of the worker behavior category percentages by phases of work. Client talk percentages and in-mode percentages can be found at the bottom of the table. The progressive decline in elaboration behaviors shown could reflect the worker's efforts to use the beginning phase to help the client tell his or her story.

It is interesting to note which categories increased in the work and ending phases as the elaboration category decreased. Using the theoretical model described earlier, one would expect an increase in feeling behaviors, demand for work behaviors (as client resistence sets in), and attention to obstacles. Instead, one finds a shift to directing the client away from his or her themes, criticizing, providing solutions, and silence. This represented an overall decrease of in-mode behavior from a high of 65.3 percent in the beginning phase to 57.5 percent in the work phase.

The data may be taken as a statistical description of the following typical comment by students: "I seem to do well in the beginning, but what do I do in the work phase?" Without an effort to invest the

TABLE 3.5
Work with Individuals: Beginning, Work, and Ending Phases

	Category	*Beginning (13,140) (%)*	*Work (14,040) (%)*	*Ending (13,068) (%)*
IN MODE	1. Purpose	0	0	0
	2. Elaboration	45.3	36.0	30.9
	3. Feelings	2.5	2.5	2.0
	4. Demand	0	0	0
	5. Data	7.5	7.6	14.2
	6. Obstacle	0.2	0	0
OUT OF MODE	7. Directs	32.5	37.5	34.6
	8. Criticizes	1.8	3.5	2.6
	9. Provides	0.5	1.2	4.7
	10. Silence	10.0	11.9	11.4

Phases	*Client Talk (%)*	*In Mode (%)*
Beginning	61.6	65.3
Work	59.6	57.7
Ending	58.9	58.1

work with feeling (the worker's and the client's), a demand to stay with the difficulties, and a willingness to deal with blocks openly, the work may become obscured, leading the worker to become more directive. He or she focuses on his or her themes rather than on those of the client. Criticism and exhortation become the tools of the worker who is not sure of how to deal with the themes raised in the beginning stage.

The shift in the ending phase is even more revealing. As sessions move to a conclusion, workers often feel the need to "tie things up." It is difficult for workers to tolerate lack of closure, and the need to come up with an answer takes hold. If the work in the middle phase has broken down, the worker will feel a greater sense of urgency to influence the client. The findings indicate increased data offering by the worker and increased efforts to provide solutions. Some of the increase in data offering may reflect information that the worker needs to share with the client. For example, such items as agency policy changes, visiting times with children, and so on often are saved until the end. However, the increase in worker efforts to provide solutions or data is pronounced enough to offer some support for further analysis.

There are other possible explanations of these findings. The one advanced here reflects a particular practice orientation. No matter what orientation one brings to bear on the data, the findings do suggest the importance of increased exploration of the dynamics of the work phase. The helping professions have become increasingly sophisticated at describing beginnings and endings, but as workers often point out, the middles are the most difficult.

Summary

Each of the formats for analysis described in this section can be used in a number of ways. Analysis of prepared tapes can help students develop a keen eye for practice and the ability to understand the impact of factors such as time. Once the rating skills have been mastered, students can use the technique to analyze their practice and to measure changes in their work. Pairs of students can rate each other's practice and then discuss the results.

INTERACTION BETWEEN CATEGORIES

The analysis thus far has been limited to counting the number of times a particular category was scored during a session and computing percentages based on the total number of observations. While this provides a rough estimate of the quantity of interactions in sessions, it does not reveal information about the order of interactions or their relationship to each other.

For example, we can compute the number of units of silence, of client talk, and of a particular worker behavior. It would be extremely interesting to explore these data further and attempt to determine which category of behavior tended to follow the silences. For example, in a particular session or combination of sessions, did the client or the worker tend to break the silences? When the worker broke the silences, how did he or she do it? The potential for deepening our understanding of the patterns of practice is evident.

A technique for exploring the interaction of categories of observed behavior was developed by Flanders in relation to a teaching observation system.[11] This technique has been used with the observation data in this study and the results of the analysis are illustrated in the next section.

Producing an Interaction Matrix

As raters watched the tapes (after the mapping preview), they scored the interaction with a line of consecutive entries. A line of entries might appear as follows:

2 – 2 – 11 – 11 – 3 – 3 – 10 – 10 – 10 – 7

These entries might describe the following exchange. The worker asks what is on the client's mind (2s); the client answers by describing a problem (11s); the worker responds by asking for the client's affect (3s). There is a period of nine seconds of silence (10s) followed by the worker changing the subject (7).

In order to establish some sense of the sequence of behaviors, the computer program paired each entry with the one just before and one just after. The previous exchange would be paired as follows:

2 – 2 – 11 – 11 – 3 – 3 – 10 – 10 – 10 – 7

Each pair of entries was then counted. In this example the results were: 1 (2-2), 1 (2-11), 1 (11-11), 1 (11-3), 1 (3-3), 1 (3-10), 2 (10-10), and 1 (10-7). In a full report of a session we would have a large number of these pairs. If we counted all of the 10-7 pairs in an interview, we would have a rough measure of how many times silence (10) was broken by the worker directing the client away from his or her theme of concern (7).

The computer program then displays this information in the form of a matrix. Table 3.6 shows the matrix based on the combined data of all 32 individual sessions. The categories are listed in the first column and then repeated across the top of the matrix. To find out how many times silences (10) were broken by workers directing the client away from his or her theme of concern (7), one reads down the first column to number 10 and then across the row to column 7. This particular pair of interactions was counted 302 times. The following section illustrates how a matrix might be used to reveal insights into the pattern of interaction in work with individuals and groups.

Interaction Matrix–Work with Individuals

This discussion is based on the data provided in table 3.6. Reading across the elaboration row, we see only 37 units of behavior related to feelings. This is another way of pinpointing the problem of low attention to affect described earlier. If workers were making an

TABLE 3.6
Interaction Matrix: 32 Individual Sessions – Analysis Based on 39,177 Discrete Observations

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Purpose	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elaboration	2	1	1146	37	0	41	1	10	1	1	214	4051
Feelings	3	0	206	85	0	6	0	9	0	0	25	182
Demand	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Data	5	0	67	3	0	823	0	3	2	0	43	583
Obstacle	6	0	24	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	4
Directs	7	0	28	3	0	4	0	2254	28	16	296	2836
Criticizes	8	0	70	0	0	0	0	60	189	5	14	147
Provides	9	1	1	0	0	0	1	35	2	203	13	75
Silence	10	0	195	28	0	41	0	302	39	16	446	667
Client Talk	11	0	4059	210	0	612	5	2800	155	90	688	14964
Total		2	5798	368	0	1527	13	5473	416	331	1740	23509

effort to integrate substance and feeling consistently, a larger number of these pairs would be expected. As the client was asked to share the details of the concern, the worker also would be requesting the affective component.

Another interesting figure on this line would be the 2-10 combination. In this case it is 214, providing some measure of the worker's waiting in silence to allow the client to respond. Of course this box also could be interpreted as a measure of how quickly the client responds to worker elaboration efforts. The largest number of client statements on the matrix (4,051) is in direct response to worker elaboration efforts.

Worker intervention related to feelings was followed most often by elaboration moves (206), which might indicate that workers followed affective comments relating to their own feelings or those of the client by moving back to elaboration of details. There are only 25 units of silence following feeling behaviors, which seems low when one considers that clients often need some time for reflection in order to respond affectively. When the reverse pair is examined – silences followed by feeling moves (10-3) – we find only 28 entries. This could be a description of a common process in which a worker reaches for affect, gets silence in return, and does not stay with the client's feelings that are hidden by the silence.

Behaviors offering data are followed most often by more of the same (823), which probably represents a pattern of short presentations. The 43 units of 5-10 are intriguing, but we do not know the specific nature of the silences. Perhaps the client was thinking about what the worker had said, or perhaps the client simply had not understood. A pattern of conversation versus lecture could be inferred if the 5-5 score and the 5-11 score showed some sense of equality. A fairly even balance might represent a conversation, while a strikingly uneven balance could mean that a worker had been talking at the client. In this case the balance favored the workers, with 823 units of 5-5 and only 583 units of 5-11.

The impact of directing the client away from his or her concern is striking in relation to the resultant silences, with 296 entries. This may reflect those moments when a worker seemed to move away from the client and the client stared back blankly.

Another interesting analysis is the response to silence. Reading across that row we find 195 units of elaboration but only 28 units of feeling. There were no units of demand for work or dealing with obstacles. Since silence is one of the most important ways that clients speak to workers, the lack of entries in the 10-6 box is cause for concern. There were 41 units of responding to silence with data. The next striking figure is the 302 units of responding to silence with directing the client away from his or her theme of concern. Criticism and offering solutions also were higher for this row than for the rest. The entry of 146 units in the 10-10 box indicates a fairly high percentage of time when the worker responded to silence with silence. The pattern relating to silences seems to support the notion that they do present some difficulty for workers.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE WORK

This chapter was designed as an illustration of the potential power of observation systems. For example, the present system with its limitations can be used to obtain research data that may help us understand the complexities of the helping process. In addition, the system can be used as an effective training device. Workers can analyze audiotapes or videotapes of their own practice using noncomputer methods of tallying categories and creating their own matrices. Students who have used this system have reported a powerful impact on their ability to analyze tapes of their own practice and that of others. Any system that enables workers to view their practice in new ways can provide important feedback for skill development.

This segment of the overall design was completed early in the project and because of the demands of the main body of the study, further development of the system in the social work context was halted. There were, however, concurrent efforts to develop a variation of this sytem for use in analyzing videotapes of university teaching.[12] Details of this project will not be reported here. However, two innovations in scoring and computing results will have a bearing on future developments. The first involved the development of parallel categories for scoring instructor and student behavior. Whereas all client behaviors in this system were limited to a single category (two in the group version, one in the individual version), in the teaching version specific student behavior also is quantified.

A second major change was in the mode of scoring. All observed behaviors were scored in the social work system (often more than one entry would be made in a three-second interval). In the new system, an entry was made for the instructor and the students every five seconds. A digital clock device was used in taping the classroom sessions so that the changing seconds and minutes appeared in the upper corner of the monitor. Raters were able to develop the ability to monitor the tape and the clock so that entries were made at the exact five-second intervals. The rater had to judge the most important instructor and student behavior in the interval and enter only one category for each that characterized the five-second segment.

While some information was lost in this system, this was offset by the acquisition of potentially more valuable benefits. For example, the computer printout was designed to indicate the entry for both the instructor and the student with the time notation along side. This printout provided a time reference that could be used to return to specific time segments of the tape in order to review interesting or novel interaction. Instructor behaviors interacting with specific student behaviors also could be examined. Rater reliability could be examined not only as an overall percentage of categories scored, but also on an entry-by-entry basis. When a second generation of the social work category observation system is developed, this important time-based reference system will be introduced.

NOTES

1. Robert Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Press, 1950).
2. Henry S. Maas, "Group Influences on Client-Worker Interaction," *Social Work*, Vol. 9 (April 1964), pp. 70-79.
3. Florence Hollis, "Explorations in the Development of a Typology of Casework Treatment," *Social Casework*, Vol. 48 (June 1967), pp. 335-41.
4. A. Simon and E. G. Boyer, eds., *Mirrors for Behavior: An Anthology of Classroom Observation Instruments*, Vols. 1-6 (Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, 1967).

5. The behaviors in the categories used by the observers in the research project differed from this listing (Categories 1, 2, and 4). These differences are discussed when the findings are presented. The revised version is presented as a second generation observation system.
6. Special conventions were created for dealing with data shared by the worker at the start or end of a session that was relevant to the client but not directly responsive. See Appendix B for a summary of rules and conventions.
7. It should be noted that reliability estimates are based on comparisons of overall percentages of categories used. It was not possible to compare each individual entry. It is possible that individual entries differed more widely than the overall percentage computations.
8. Lawrence Shulman, *A Study of the Helping Process* (Vancouver, B.C.: School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1977).
9. Timing was important in making entries. Raters were trained to develop a three-second cadence whenever a category persisted over time and categories were close together during testing periods. However, as time passed and the quantity of tapes scored increased, raters observed differences in cadences, between raters, and even within sessions. A flashing light with a three-second timer was introduced behind the monitor, providing a subliminal signal to the raters which aided them in maintaining their pace.
10. Shulman, *op. cit.*
11. N. A. Flanders and E. J. Amidon, *The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom* (Minneapolis: Association for Productive Teaching, 1967).
12. This author helped to develop a center at McGill University called the Instructional Development Service. The purpose was to provide services to faculty interested in analyzing and improving their teaching effectiveness. The teach-observation system was developed in collaboration with colleagues for use by the staff of this center.

4

TEACHING PRACTICE SKILLS

The teaching of practice skills is a complex process. A full discussion of this subject is beyond the scope of this book, but part of it that we may examine here is the function of the instructor as a model of the helping skills in action. There are many valid ways in which an instructor can organize the content of his or her course and structure the work. In the last analysis, however, students learn as much about the instructor's views of the helping process from his or her actions as from what he or she says.

The purpose of a class is different from that of a social work group. There also are differences between the functions of a social worker and those of a teacher. In spite of these differences in purpose and function, there are classroom dynamics, learning processes, and instructor skills that are common to both.[1] While the instructor pursues his or her teaching function in relation to the educational purposes of the class, he or she becomes a model of the helping process in action.

Because of the ease with which a social work practice course may become lost in areas not relevant to the educational task, a number of qualifications need to be stressed here. For example, a practice class is not a therapeutic encounter designed to aid students in working out their personal problems. Their feelings about themselves, their reactions to issues with which they help clients cope, their struggles to develop a professional identity, and their experiences are all relevant as long as they are directly connected with issues of professional practice.

Thus when students have associations to their own life experiences triggered by the struggles of their clients, an instructor who is clear about purpose and function helps them use their feelings to deepen their understanding of the client and to understand the connections between their feelings and their client interventions. Explorations of personal issues that depart from the practice connotations, even when students request these, represent a subversion of the educational purpose. The instructor who demonstrates his or her ability to guard the contract and the focus of the work will free the students to move into it with a depth of feeling, secure in the knowledge that their personal lives will not be invaded. He or she also demonstrates the importance of clarity of purpose and the skill that is involved in protecting the contract.

In a like manner, the dichotomizing of content and process in classrooms can have an equally negative impact.[2] An effective teacher must pay some attention to the way in which students work with each other and with the instructor — what is referred to as the class process. If attention to process becomes a substitute for work on practice issues — for example, endless arguments in class about the agenda or about whether students trust each other — then purpose is lost again. If the opposite is true — that instructor and class never discuss the issues involved in their way of working — then like any helping process, the class will become blocked by obstacles experienced by all as taboo subjects. Once again the instructor becomes an important model of the ability to synthesize process and task, a skill each student must develop in working with clients and client groups.

One important way to avoid getting trapped by the dichotomies of personal versus professional, and content versus process is to have examples of practice integrated into the classroom discussion. No matter what the organizing principle of the course (and there are many effective approaches to organizing the material) or the practice theory of the instructor, examples of interaction from prepared material or student work can be introduced. Students can be asked to recall incidents from memory, record them and share them in process format, use audiotapes or videotapes, or role plays. Whatever combinations of techniques are used, the method class can always return to the specifics of the case and the important question of how one uses the feelings, the insights, the values, and the convictions in taking a next step with a real client. By using specific examples, the instructor can avoid the danger of becoming too theoretical. The problems created by the artificial dichotomies described above can be somewhat reduced by refusing to be trapped by another false dualism, the split between theory and practice.

With these comments as an introduction and framework for viewing the material that follows, we will now go on to examine many of the same skills discussed in Chapter One. However, this time the illustrations are drawn from classroom teaching practice.

The phases of work, used earlier in connection with social work interviews, provide just as helpful a construct in considering a practice class. First sessions with a class constitute a form of contracting.

CONTRACTING

Many of the assumptions about first sessions suggested in Chapter One hold true for first classes.[3] A first class meeting is a beginning, and as such is accompanied by many natural responses to strangeness. This holds true for both students and the instructor. The way in which a course begins can have an important impact on future classes.

The dynamics of the first class deserve our attention. The major questions in students' minds deal with purpose and structure, as well as with the role of the instructor. They need to see the connection between the subject to be studied and their own sense of urgency (the common ground) if they are to invest themselves fully in the learning process. Contracting in the classroom represents a beginning effort at *clarifying purpose*, *clarifying role*, and *encouraging student feedback*. The ground rules for the engagement (for example, assignments, grading policy, class organization) need to be defined. Students will be sizing up the instructor. As with all first encounters with authority people, they need to test the instructor's reactions and generally will do so indirectly.

These are, of course, the same technical problems that the students will face in dealing with their clients. The skills are described and illustrated here with process recording excerpts drawn from the author's own early classroom teaching experiences.[4] Summary recordings were dictated following each class, and were used as a learning tool designed to help the author, who was then a new instructor, focus on his own classroom skills. The examples are presented as an illustration of essential elements rather than as the only way to begin. Experiments with varied structures and approaches have convinced me that there are many routes to the same end, and ample room for personal styles.

As the class began, I made an opening statement designed to set a broad focus and to clarify some of my assumptions about how the class would proceed. My process recording of a first class follows:

> I welcomed the students and introduced myself. I explained that our subject was social work practice — what it is that social workers do as they work with their clients. As a generic practice class, we would be interested in examining the underlying practice themes which relate to working with individuals, groups, families, and community groups, as well as those skills required in having impact on larger systems. I then suggested that it would be helpful if I outlined some assumptions about our work together. First, we would focus on method — human behavior, ethics, values, and so on would also be important — but only as it related to what the worker eventually does. A second assumption was that there was an underlying, common process in work with different kinds of clients and groups, and that we could look at both the similarities and differences. A third assumption was that we would need to use examples of real practice, both provided by me and shared from their own experiences, to illustrate the method issues and to keep our discussions close to reality. Another assumption was that we would in some ways be a model of the process in action and that we could learn from our experiences without spending all our time discussing them. They would probably learn a great deal about my views on helping by the way I taught the class, my skills, and my mistakes. Finally, my job in the class would be to help lead them through the subject, to share my own views as we went along, and to help them work effectively with each other. I paused and asked for their reactions or questions.

The usual reaction at this point is a general shaking of heads, murmurs of "that sounds good," and so on. Students do not really understand at first the meaning of these assumptions, which need to be explored in detail as the classes proceed. However, the statement does provide some sense of the instructor's general thrust.

The class continued with a review of the prepared syllabus, describing the general areas to be covered during the year, some of the issues within these areas, expectations for classroom work and assignments, and grading. It is important that students have a sense of structure in a course. They want to know that the instructor has some idea of where they will be going and that there is some means of getting there. A structure is critical in freeing students to work, but at the same time it must be flexible and allow them to pursue independent lines of work.

Once this important discussion has taken place, the balance of the first class can focus on helping the students begin to know each other (introductions) and begin to identify how the classwork may relate to their sense of urgency. This is the time when *feedback is encouraged.* An additional skill demonstrated in this section of work is that of *encouraging intermember communication*. Students will be expected to talk to each other as well as the instructor and the pattern can be set in the first class, as the following example shows:

> 'Some of you have had experience in social welfare settings [this class contained post-BA students returning for a BSW degree] and some are just starting out. Let's take some time while you share with each other some of the questions you would like to see dealt with in our work. What kinds of problems did you run into in your previous efforts at working with people as social workers, teachers; camp counsellors, whatever? Perhaps we can get a sense of your issues. Who would like to begin?'

There is usually a silence at this point while students think of examples and issues, or wonder if they should be the first to risk speaking. After a brief pause, recognition of the feelings by *getting inside the silence* usually helps: "It's not easy to be the first one."

> Louise began a bit hesitantly: 'I want to know how you can help someone who doesn't want to be helped.' There were nods of agreement in the class. I said: 'Sounds like you have had some tough cases. Can you share some examples — and by the way, *share them with the rest of the class because you are all going to be doing a lot of talking to and listening to each other.*' Louise continued by describing a summer job in a child welfare setting and a mother she was sent to interview because of reports of child neglect. She described how angry the mother was and how tough the interview had been. I said: 'It sounds like a rough way to start. How about the rest of you? Any similar experiences, or others? Let's get a feel for them even though we can't solve all of the problems this morning.'

Another student gave a similar account and sympathized with the first student's feeling of helplessness. A third student provided an example of a different problem with a teenager she had worked with as a volunteer in a big sister program. The youngster had never said more than "yes" or "no" to her. While it was clear that contract was a problem in both examples, the instructor resisted the temptation to begin to "teach," but instead continued to encourage a sharing of experiences. The class group began to emerge, as students described, often with humor, some of the dilemmas they had experienced.[5] When students spoke directly to the instructor, he reminded them to share their comments with the rest of the class. One could begin to sense the reassurance that students felt by finding that the others were "in the same boat."

After 20 minutes of problem sharing, the instructor summarized some of the issues and pointed out how they could relate to the syllabus outline. He assured the class that while all the problems couldn't be tackled at once, he felt they were all relevant and would emerge in future work. At this point, the skill of *offering data* was demonstrated as the instructor used 15 minutes to begin to outline his frame of reference. It is important in the first session for the instructor to show that he or she will be sharing his or her own ideas and views about practice and that these will be presented openly, as a tentative bias. Students have to be encouraged to view the instructor's ideas as open to challenge, and be reassured that taking on "the expert" is not only acceptable, but valued. In a study of classroom teaching skills, I found that after *knowing the subject* and *being able to present it clearly*, the next most important teaching skill was *the ability to present ideas in a way that left them open to challenge.*[6]

> 'I want to take a few minutes to share my present frame of reference. Before I do, I want to make it clear that this is a tentative bias and that it's open to challenge. There are a number of theories about social work practice and no consensus about which one is right. At least you can begin to get some idea about the framework I will be operating from in our discussions.'

The last few minutes of the class were involved in reviewing assignment procedures, a request that students begin reading from the selections dealing with the impact of agency function, and a proposal that the next class begin by looking at the elements of the beginning phase of work — agency service, client need, and how the worker brings the two together.

The final request was for evaluative feedback on the first class — positive or negative.

> 'It's going to be important that you feed your reactions back into the class, not just to each other over lunch. How about it, what do you think about this start and of our plan for work?' After some generally positive feedback, I attempted to reach for possible negatives: 'Anyone not so positive about the start?' John responded: 'It sounds good, but I really wonder if we are going to be able to do this. I've seen good starts before.' I replied: 'I don't blame you for wondering. I'll try to help us work this way, and I think we can do it. But if you feel I'm missing then let me know. I appreciate your honest comment.'

ELABORATION SKILLS

As students begin to explore the complex process of helping, they often wonder about their own abilities. Feelings are generated in reaction to the work, which students often assume are theirs alone rather than a normal part of the learning process. There will be important points in the school year, critical moments that will bring these issues to the forefront. Evaluation time, the ending of the first year, and the beginning of the second year all generate universal themes that the instructor must recognize. If left without discussion, these feelings may work beneath the surface to affect the productivity of the class. In addition, the process in the class often is directly connected to the content of the work.

In the following example, another group of students (undergraduates who were almost completely new to the field) used the class to raise indirectly an important concern. The class described was on the day before the commencement of fieldwork.

> We had been discussing how clients use indirect communication to raise their concerns. I had shared Carl Roger's comment that he was pleased if he felt he really heard 10 percent of what his patients were saying. I noticed that right after my comment there was a change in the tone of the class. What had been a spirited discussion seemed to trail off — there were pauses — they seemed to be searching for comments.
>
> Ron said he thought 'you had to have a special kind of personality to be a social worker.' I asked what he meant but he did not elaborate. A few students quickly took the discussion off his statement but it still went nowhere. I finally asked what had happened? Why had they suddenly seemed to poop out. There was a pause and then Ron said: 'I don't know about the others but I'm a little worried about starting fieldwork tomorrow.' Others in the class immediately responded, both verbally and with facial expressions. They too were wondering what it was going to be like — how they would do as social workers?
>
> This precipitated a discussion of their fear of becoming 'cardboard social workers,' mechanical and unfeeling. At the same time they wondered if they could really handle being open and 'real' with their clients. I credited their discussion and pointed out that we would have to watch this question closely as our class proceeded — how they could be both professional social workers and themselves at the same time.
>
> I thought it might be helpful if we used an exercise called tuning in. I explained the importance of developing preliminary empathy, tentatively, so that they might be more sensitive to their clients' indirect communications. I asked someone to share their setting and the kind of client they might be seeing. Ron said he would probably have to do some street work with kids at the shopping mall — kids who had been getting into trouble with the law. I asked the whole class to put themselves in the shoes of the kids and to share what they thought these kids might be concerned about. For example, some of the feelings they might have toward school, friends, sex, drugs, etc. I insisted that they say 'I,' and express the feeling by first trying to really feel it themselves . . . or as closely as possible. After a tentative start they went into the exercise with enthusiasm, identifying potential areas of work as well as potential areas of resistance to agencies, adults, and social workers. We discussed how these themes might emerge indirectly and discussed Ron's possible strategy of responding to the indirect cues by reaching directly for the feelings behind them.

This example illustrates the importance of attention to process. If the sluggish class work had been allowed to continue, it would have constituted an illusion of work and an important concern would have been ignored. If the discussion of their self-doubts had continued, this also would have been a mistake. The *demand for work*, which pulled them into the tuning in exercise, did not deny their doubts. It did offer an opportunity to take a next step and to begin to do something that might help them work more effectively in spite of their doubts.

The full circle was completed in that class when near the end I asked them to reflect on what had happened.

> One student pointed out that they only really levelled when I asked them what was wrong in the class. Another said: 'But what if we didn't say anything about fieldwork or didn't even realize how much it bothered us'? I said I thought I would have risked that hunch myself since my students often felt like that just before field starts, and for the same reasons. I had anticipated the possiblity of some reactions on their part from my own tuning in. Ron said: 'You mean it's not magic, something you're born with?' I told Ron I was sure we each brought something we were born with to the work, but that real skill was not magic — it could be learned, and that the whole class was making a good start with today's work.

This excerpt illustrates how the class process can be used to enrich the understanding of content. A demonstration of the students' own use of indirect communication can have a more powerful impact on their learning than a theoretical discussion of the ideas of Carl Rogers. Students also can learn a great deal from the mistakes of the instructor, as the next excerpt illustrates.

DEALING WITH THE AUTHORITY THEME

Students are vulnerable in the beginning states of their practice and prone to be defensive about their work. For example, it takes some confidence before a student will really invite negative feedback from clients. The same can be true for an instructor who is asked to take on the complex job of teaching with little preparation and minimal ongoing support. Faced with the task of teaching a group of 20 or more students, even experienced practitioners begin this new role with trepidation.

Most challenges to the instructor are only hinted at indirectly because students follow the generally accepted norms of good behavior, which frustrate real talk in most social situations. These challenges often appear in the form of apathy, lateness, absenteeism, withholding assignments, or the creation of an illusion of work in the classroom. Because of their indirect nature, they are very difficult to deal with. This is, of course, the same problem students face in dealing with clients.

On occasion the instructor will find a student ready to challenge his or her views openly, often with strong feelings. These students can be seen as "deviant class members" and explained away as "obviously having personal problems" or "unresolved difficulty with authority." The practice parallel is the client who is diagnosed as "resistant." While it is true that there will be students who simply can't use the instructor or the school experience for a number of personal reasons, more often than not the anger or directness is a signal of urgency. Students who openly challenge the instructor's theories can be allies rather than enemies. They often express concerns or feelings that others may feel but refuse to relate directly. The challenge may be a sign that the classroom work is going well and is beginning to touch the students in a real way. To return to the practice parallel, it can signal the resistance that is expected when work is meaningful. In fact, the lack of such resistance may be a signal that the work is only an illusion.

These ideas are easy to understand but hard to operationalize, particularly in the early stages of teaching when the instructor's sense of security is weak. The parallel to the students' struggle is close, and the students will learn a great deal from the instructor's reactions. The illustration that follows is from a practice class taught early in the author's experience, and demonstrates how easy it is to become defensive. The second excerpt, from a class a week later, illustrates the possibility of correcting mistakes.

> Bunny began to present a process recording of her intake interview with a depressed patient. The situation was a difficult one and there was unusual quiet when I asked for some tuning in. June started to get close to it by thinking about someone in her own family who had died and how people really went to pieces. Someone pointed out that we can get too involved and lose sight of the healthy part of people. Other students started to resist my demand that they really get into the client's shoes. Fran jumped in, and with some force, challenged the whole tuning in idea. She said: 'It's all a bunch of crap!' I was somewhat taken aback by her directness and the strength of her feelings. Instead of dealing with her reaction, I began to talk about the importance of feeling and started a mini-lecture, obviously directed toward Fran, on 'what makes a real person.'
>
> Fran responded to the lecture by saying: 'It's like we are two-bit psychologists who don't know what we're talking about.' The class seemed to be starting to support Fran in this view, which increased my panic. They raised the issue of labelling people and I defended

> myself, saying this was not what I was suggesting. Bob said: 'We're only students and we could easily overdo things.' I sensed that they were reacting to the whole problem of getting close to feelings, but my feelings stopped me from really empathizing. I pushed on by interpreting their resistance and kept coming back to Fran as its leader. At one point, she said: 'You don't know me,' and I agreed that she was right. Rita jumped in at this point and said: 'Why do you keep coming back to her (Fran)? Why don't you let her learn for herself?' This jolted me and I realized I was pushing too hard. As a result, I pulled back and sat quietly for a while, listening to the discussion and trying to get back in touch. When Fran closed her books ten minutes before the end of class I commented angrily, still mad at her. A few minutes later when Bunny said, indirectly referring to me: 'I was wondering how authoritative you have to be in a group.' I realized just how far wrong I had gone in class. As I pulled back again, the issue of my authority in the class emerged as a 'doorknob' theme. Tom, who was a mature student said he had been upset, as were a few others, because I had changed the subject we had agreed to discuss last week. I acknowledged this and tried to own up to the fact that it wasn't exactly a great class. However, I realized I would have to deal with this issue in the next class. I was shaken by what had happened and surprised at how I had handled things. Perhaps I could use this to begin to move differently. Fran had been my ally in that class but I hadn't realized it.

Fortunately, it's possible to correct mistakes. After a period of agonizing analysis, I formed a strategy about how to meet this issue head on. By doing so, I demonstrated to the students the importance of using feedback, which is a critical skill for students to develop.

> As the class opened, the tension in the room was evident. I began by sharing my feelings about the last session. 'I think I did a lousy job last class, and I'm not feeling too good about it. I would like to set the record straight. First of all, I began the class with what I thought was urgent, while ignoring that many of you still had important issues related to the previous week's discussion. In addition, when a major idea of mine was challenged by Fran, who said she thought it was a lot of crap, I neither tried to find out why she felt that way nor let her hold onto her opinion. In many ways I contradicted everything I had said about the way we would work as a class. I invited you to take me on and then cut you down when you did. Frankly, I'm very embarrassed about what happened.' They were quiet when I finished. Their facial expressions seemed to relax and the tension appeared to dissipate. Rita said they didn't want me out of the picture. She continued: 'Somehow you have to integrate the teaching and the group leading piece better.' I said: 'I wouldn't just cut and run, since it is my job to teach this class and I intend to do it. I just thought I could do a better job than last week and wanted to start again.' I thought we should move directly into the audiotape of Jane's first interview and everyone quickly agreed.

The discussion of the authority theme and the honest admission of mistakes had not resolved the issue. It had, however, freed the class to begin to work. This time the investment in the work was striking as the students moved, in their own way, into the very issue I had felt the need to pursue in the previous class.

> The tape of the first interview indicated a lack of focus, with the student using a question-answer routine while skirting around very potent client feelings. After the tape was completed, there was silence and obvious thoughtfulness. Bunny began: 'What would you do if someone broke down in front of you?' Audrey responded, 'I had an interview where the client cried, and I found I didn't cry even though I usually do.' Joe said, 'How deep do you really want to get on the first interview? I mean if we are as direct with our contract statements as you're suggesting, people just might take us up.' I said: 'I wonder if you're worrying if the client can take it or if you can.' June said, 'It depends upon the personality of the worker.' I said: 'I wonder what exactly you're concerned might happen if you did get right into the client's feelings?' Bunny answered, 'I don't know what the heck I would do with them if I got them.' Aron entered the conversation: 'I'm afraid that if the clients get too depressed, I'm going to get depressed with them. What kind of help could I be then?' I responded, 'That's the dilemma, isn't it? How can I get close to the client's feelings, make a gift in a sense of my willingness to be with him, and at the same time still be helpful.' I noted that we were close to the end of the class and suggested we pick up on this next class. I offered to present a model describing what I thought happened in the interview, sort of a 'where do I go with the feelings once I get them?' They agreed eagerly. I asked for a volunteer to bring a record of an interview to illustrate the discussion, and Aron offered to bring one. There was a subdued feeling in the class as we ended. I felt we had gotten into very important work. Before they were willing to risk with me and each other, they had to sort out where we stood. Fran had been quiet, but I think the nonverbal signals were of involvement. If she stayed out very long, I would pick up with her outside of class to see where we stood. I wasn't completely sure of how the class was feeling, but I knew I was feeling better.

In one form or another, usually less dramatically than this example, a class group has to work on its relationship to the instructor early in the first semester. This work is carried on concurrently with the work on the content, and in fact becomes a powerful illustration of the content in action. In their logs, which my students maintained as an assignment for the course, many students commented on the impact of this class. I decided not to discuss it further, feeling that all that had been needed was to identify the problem, own up to my part in it, and get on with the work. It is through effective work on the issues of practice content that a fund of positive feeling can be built in the class, which will allow both instructor and students to deal more effectively with the problems that emerge. This will be particularly important when students begin to deal with a potentially even more difficult issue — how they work with each other.

OFFERING DATA AND EMPATHIC RESPONSES

The instructor must share his or her own views about practice so that students can have access to these along with other sources of data. While doing this, it is important to remember that a concept which seems simple to the instructor after years of experience may not be simple to students. Dewey suggested that each new idea has to be created by the learner and cannot be passed along by the teacher.[7] In a sense, one can think of teaching as mediating between the learner and the subject area, observing the interaction between the two elements, and helping the learner construct a model of the ideas under study.

As the instructor shares his or her views it is important to monitor the eyes of the students. They often will reveal the moment when students lose the work. They may cut off because of overload (too many ideas at one time), because of an inability to connect the idea to practical experiences, because of feelings generated by the discussion, or because of associations to past experiences (and mistakes). If the instructor can overcome the feeling that 20 sets of glazed eyes signify a failure, he or she can reach for the reactions of the moment, and by so doing, help to deepen the students' understanding.

This process is central to an interactional approach to teaching, in which the active learner is part of the teaching process. Teaching can only take place when learning is happening simultaneously. If students have cut off from the work, then a lecture becomes simply an instructor talking. The same is true in the helping process that takes place between social worker and client. The following example illustrates this process.

> I began the class by asking the students if there was something on their minds before I presented the model I had mentioned the previous week. They had nothing to say and seemed ready to begin. I gave a presentation lasting 20 minutes in which I outlined on the board how I saw a helping interview proceeding. I included both the worker's tasks and the client's, with special emphasis on dealing with affect. There were questions as we went along which seemed to indicate that the students were following. I kept monitoring eyes for confirmation.
>
> When the presentation was finished there was a silence and a numb look on their faces. I reached for it: 'What's happening? You all look a bit numb. Did I overwhelm you just then?' Bunny, who is emerging as an internal class leader, said: 'There is a big gap between the theory on the board and what we are able to do.' I said: 'It must be particularly tough on you right now, since you're beginning, and feeling there is so much to learn.'

The class began to work on the question of feelings. June: 'I've seen Dr. Frank work with clients and he is rough and tough with them. I'm not sure which is right.' Joel: 'I'm beginning to realize that what is so hard about this is that we really need to help ourselves if we are going to help our clients.' Ted: 'These things we need to do with clients, I'm not so good about doing them with my wife and kids. I keep thinking about how empathic I should be with them.' Rita: 'You know, some of the students in the class are really beginning to wonder if they should stay in social work.'

I acknowledged how hard it was for them and said: 'Sometimes I have to remind myself how tough it can feel at the beginning. It helps when I relate to my own struggle with teaching, like the sleep I lost over the difficulty we were having in class a few weeks ago.' Rita: 'Does it ever get better?' I told the class I thought it did: 'For example, the more you learn to listen and feel with your clients, the more they teach you about life. Your capacity for empathy expands and you find yourself generally more comfortable with their feelings. The rest of your professional life will be spent learning about others and yourself — but you don't have to do it all at once. The problem right now is that you're too hard on yourselves. Your clients don't expect you to have all the answers. They just want to see you making the effort to understand. It's the trying to get close that is helpful. How do you think this difficulty with feelings affects your work?'

Aron replied: 'You simply don't get close to the feelings and then cut them off when they get too hot to handle.' I remembered that Aron had offered to bring a record of an interview and asked if what he had just described had happened to him in this case. He said he thought it had. I asked the class if we could move to his record, and as we worked with his illustration on this issue we could generalize to all of their experiences. They agreed and we began a line-by-line discussion of his work, using the model on the board to help focus the analysis. Aron was free in sharing his feelings during the time of the interview and open to student comments and criticisms, including suggestions about how to handle it differently. The students, in turn, were supportive and commenting on the positives in the session (the contracting work). They admitted that they probably would have made all of the same mistakes.

THE DEMAND FOR WORK

Sharing examples of practice is not an easy thing to do in class. Students need help in developing a culture in which they can use their work, mistakes and all, as illustrations of the process in action. This work is different from supervision, in which the student is central. The practice is the issue in the class. The importance of using student material along with examples provided by the instructor is that it helps the class develop a mutual aid capacity and lowers natural defenses against sharing work examples.

The instructor needs to make a demand for this form of involvement as well as be prepared to help students deal with their fears. The most powerful concern they have is not the adverse judgment of the instructor, but the possible negative judgments of their peers. It is only after some experience, when they find that the instructor and their classmates can be both critical and supportive, that the culture slowly changes. The new norm does not credit the presentation of perfect work, but rather the willingness to risk mistakes and to take help without defensiveness. The instructor must help the class develop this way of working. Here is one instance:

> Everyone agreed that it would be helpful if we picked up on some contracting work with families and groups so that we could make comparisons with work with individuals. I asked for some volunteers. There was a silence. Since I knew that at least ten of them had just had first sessions, I wasn't about to let them off the hook. 'There doesn't seem to be a great rush to volunteer. Why not?' Joel said: 'I'm not going to bring a record in here. Do you think I'm crazy?' I asked him what he thought would happen. Joel: 'Look, I have made all of the mistakes possible and I'd rather not share that with the class.' I asked if the others felt a bit like Joel and a number of students responded. Bunny said: 'Look, I shared the telephone interview two weeks ago and it was terrible. You all found my mistakes, and while it was going on it wasn't very comfortable. However, it wasn't a disaster, I wasn't slaughtered by it, and I found it very helpful.' I said: 'I think it is important that you learn to give and take help, especially in sensitive areas, since you will be asking your clients to do exactly that. If it is too tough for you, how can you demand it of your clients? What's scary about your fellow students anyway?' June replied: 'My problem is that I don't know what most of them are thinking, especially the quiet ones. I assume they are doing better in their work and are sitting back amused by my mistakes.' I pointed out that the question was whether or not they could trust each other, and that was a critical issue. Audrey said: 'Look, if you're not sure of what people are thinking, you will just have to ask.' Louise, one of the quiet members, said she made all of the same mistakes. She didn't comment because she wasn't comfortable speaking in class. Actually, she admired the presenters for their courage. I credited Louise for speaking up about her feelings, since it was hard for her to do so. I continued: 'I can appreciate that I'm asking you to do a tough thing, take some risks, and put yourself on the line. But this work is not easy and that's exactly what you will need to learn to do. I think the class can handle it and I'm not going to let you off the hook by bringing in tapes or canned process records. How about it?' June offered to bring in her record for next week. Frank, one of the quiet members, said he was having trouble with a kids' group and would share it the week after if the class was interested. They indicated that they were. I felt this was a start and we could call on volunteers who had material relevant to our current issues as we went along. I thought everyone in the class should expect to share a piece before the year was up. Joel said he would think about what might be relevant. I smiled and said: 'I think we have just taken a major step as a class. It promises well for the year.'

MOVING FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC

It is not always possible to have records or tapes geared to the issue raised at the moment. A line of work may lead to unanticipated areas. It is always critical, however, to attempt to move theoretical arguments into specific examples because it is only in the specifics that issues become clear and false dichotomies can be avoided. In one class, the issue of making a clear statement of role, defining who you are and what you do as a social worker, was challenged by a student with street work experience. He struck a responsive chord among other students who were concerned about the bad reputation social workers have. Some gave examples in which they purposely did not tell their clients that they were social workers, hoping not to turn them off. As they discussed this technical issue, they also were raising a larger question that had to do with their ambivalence about being identified as social workers. In this case, the aggressive attack on the instructor's views was dealt with as a handle for work, and through the use of mini-role play it offered a chance to open a critical issue:

> I presented an outline of how a contracting session might go, stressing the importance of purpose and role. Bob reacted by vigorously attacking the idea as not being relevant to all cases. He said: 'That might work in a fancy agency, but if I tried that with the kids I work with, the minute I told them I was a social worker they would cut me off.' Other students supported this, offering stories of anti-social worker feelings among clients (and even among their friends and family). I responded: 'I can see where you're afraid of killing the relationship before you even start. I wonder, though, if you might be in more trouble if the client found out later that you had held back.' They looked troubled by the dilemma. I said: 'Why don't we turn this into an example. Bob, you're starting with kids in a high school by working the halls. Would you like to try an opening with us and we can respond as if we were the kids. That way we can look at the issues with some clients in the picture. Maybe there is a way to be straight and not turn them off.' Bob agreed to role play the worker. It was obvious to me that he was really concerned about how he was going to handle this professional function because of his general anti-establishment image. His attack on the contracting idea was his way of getting his concern tabled. I asked Bob to describe the setting, the service, and the kids. We did some tuning in exercises. With the stage set, Bob began by role playing informal conversation and chatter with no specific introduction to the kids. After a few minutes, I stopped the role play and asked the class members in their role of clients what they were thinking and feeling. Gene said: 'I'm trying to figure out what this guy has up his sleeve. Maybe he's the new undercover narc and he's looking for the dope.' Others followed suit and it became clear that a lot of suspicion of this adult was in the air, even though he wore jeans and had a beard.

The role play continued in the class with various students taking Bob's role and trying to make a more direct start. In each case they were faced with the need to say something about what they were doing there. After some efforts at finding a way of saying it without jargon, they finally phrased an offer that would let the kids know the worker was available if there were concerns about the school, friends, or family. When one student used the term "social worker," the others reacted with all of the negative response they anticipated from the kids. They asked me to show them what I would do in Bob's shoes.

> I said (role playing): 'It sounds like social workers aren't too popular around here. Can you tell me how come? If I'm to do my job, I'm going to really need to know what's gone on before so I don't make the same mistakes. I'm not those other social workers, so how about giving me a chance?' The class agreed that this might elicit some response, as students shared their past experiences which had led to the development of the stereotype. This might give the new worker a chance to sort out how he or she could be different (e.g. 'I'm not a welfare worker and I won't be visiting your homes unless you want me to'). After some additional work, they agreed that while it might not help, the kids might begin to see me as a bit different from the other workers. If something did get started, it would at least be on an honest footing. When I asked Bob what he thought, he said: 'I'm not convinced, but I can see your point. I don't think I'll start any differently though.' I told him that that was all right, and we weren't going to take any votes in the class on the right way to do it. 'Let us know how it goes.'

TEACHING THE POWER OF FUNCTIONAL CLARITY

The examples shared thus far illustrate teaching skills common to most approaches in social work practice. These skills, however, must be used in pursuit of purpose. Students need a clear idea about the nature of the work with clients. In addition, they need to develop a sense of social work function to guide them in their movements with clients and system representatives. This sense of function will be evident as the students work with individuals, groups, families, and systems representatives. It also will be observable in a range of agencies or host settings. Although each setting and client will pose unique demands on the worker and will contribute variant elements to the worker's movements, the larger social work function will remain a constant element.

The problem for the instructor is to articulate his or her own sense of professional function while at the same time freeing students to explore a range of possibilities. One way of accomplishing this is to teach the power of clarity of function, using the instructor's own framework as an illustration. The goal of the practice class is not for students to adopt the instructor's models or overall guiding theory, but to understand them, and to see how a professional can use theories and models as tools for the analysis of practice.

The line between teaching and preaching can easily blur. The instructor has an enthusiastic investment in an approach that has proved helpful. He or she is a model of a satisfied consumer and students can easily identify with the instructor and his or her model simultaneously, in an attempt to meet their own needs for certainty and closure. At the same time, they will feel the need to resist and develop their own views and to be free of the instructor's power. This flow of feeling between students and instructor, which is a central part of the classroom dynamics, often will emerge in subtle ways and needs to be discussed directly. These feelings provide the energy that powers the learning process, but they also contain elements which can block that process. The identification process can lead students to accept the instructor's views as reality rather than as a bias. Attempts by the instructor to avoid this problem by not directly revealing a bias or by withholding enthusiasm will be seen by students as insincere.

The following excerpt illustrates how a specific student example can be used to demonstrate the power of clarity of function and how an instructor can use his or her own framework (in this case, the mediating practice theory) as an illustration. The example also demonstrates the technique of asking students to recreate critical moments of work from memory.

> At the end of an analysis of John's tape-recorded first interview, Alan responded with his usual challenging note (he has developed into a class leader in taking on the instructor's views). 'That contracting idea sounds fine with clients who want the service, but what if you have one who doesn't buy the contract?' I asked if he had an example of such a client right now. He did, and began to describe a 17-year-old, new male resident of his residential group home. The agency program involved developing a contract with residents in which they decided on specific behavioral improvements on which the youngster would work. He continued: 'What happens if you want to discuss this at the first session and he doesn't?' I asked if he would describe the first session, what was said, and so on, as best he could from memory so that we could get a feel for the problem. He described a first meeting with the boy, the boy's social worker from the child welfare agency, the chief child care worker, and himself. A number of students commented that the youngster must have felt a bit overwhelmed.
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> While the chief child care worker was spelling out the importance of agreeing on a contract for change and inquiring what the boy felt he needed to work on, the youngster responded with flat affect and lack of interest or enthusiasm. I asked Alan how he felt as this was proceeding. He responded: 'It was frustrating and I felt we weren't getting anywhere.' I asked what he did, and he described how he

> joined in trying to get some real responses from the boy. The youngster finally started to cry, after trying to suppress it. Alan asked what was wrong and the youngster responded: 'It's hard for me to think about this right now because all I can think about is my father who died last week.' The class seemed stunned by this comment. I asked Alan what happened then and he said: 'There were a few seconds of silence and then both the workers jumped in to tell Alan that it was still important for him to talk about his goals at the center.' I asked Alan if he could put himself back into that moment and share with the class what he felt in the silence and afterwards. He said: 'I felt incredibly sad for the kid, and when the other two guys jumped in I was furious at them. I wanted to stop them and take the boy away to my office where I could talk to him about his feelings right then.' Other students in the class commented on the insensitivity of workers in the field, giving other examples of professionals who were cold and ungiving. I asked Alan what he did do and he described how he kept out of the rest of the session, deciding to pick up with the youngster later.

This work example offered an excellent opportunity to illustrate the power of functional clarity. Alan's first general question moved to the more specific issue of defining the social worker's role when he or she feels that the client is not getting what he or she needs from the system representatives. This is an issue all students face in their own settings. With a concrete example before the class, a framework has been built to which the instructor can now attach theoretical ideas. These same ideas, when presented in the abstract, would be harder for the students to grasp. The instructor must begin setting the stage for work by offering some structure for the discussion, as in the example below:

> 'I think this example offers us an opportunity to look at the question of functional clarity that I raised last week. My argument is that Alan's movements in this incident were guided by his sense of his helping function.' The class agreed that they would like to see how that worked. I proposed to lead them through an analysis using the mediating framework. I placed two circles on the blackboard, connected by a line, putting the boy's name in one and the child care worker's and the agency social worker's name in the other. I asked the class members to describe what they saw as the immediate problem. A number of students suggested that the two workers were not responding to the boy's feelings. I asked Alan where he would put himself in the diagram, that is, who he was emotionally with at that moment. He replied that he was feeling with the boy. I then asked, 'Who was with the workers?' Alan responded with strong feeling, 'It's not my job to be with them. They're professionals, damn it, they should be able to help this kid.' I pointed out to Alan and the class that we were at the critical question of the worker's sense of 'his job.' I continued with the following argument: 'Alan wants to take the boy back to his office and help him work on his feelings about his father. But what if the youngster's biggest problem, right at that moment, was a child care worker and an agency social worker

who were not able to stay with his feelings. After all, to this youngster, the child care staff and the welfare agency staff were part of his life. He needed things from these people, and at this time he needed some understanding. Taking it a step further, suppose I argue that Alan's function was not in fixing up Frank (the client) but in helping him to deal more effectively with those systems that were important to him in his life and in helping them to be more responsive to him.' Bunny commented, 'That's what you mean by the mediating idea.' I agreed and added a third circle below and in between the others.

I asked Alan how he thought he might have moved differently with this sense of function. He replied, 'I suppose I would have tried to help Frank get his feelings across to the other guys.' I asked the class to tune in a bit to the other workers and try to guess why they had cut Frank off. The class members speculated that it might be tough for these workers, as it often was for them, to deal with these feelings. They might not know what to do with them. I pointed out that as far as Frank experienced things, it might seem as if they just didn't care.

I asked the class to go back to the moment after the silence and to think of how they might have moved to help. I turned to Alan and said, 'I realize it's a lot easier to be smart now, after the fact, and much tougher in the middle of the action.' A few class members tried some comments that were perceived by the class as attacking the workers and putting them on the defensive. Alan tried: 'Maybe I could have said that I thought Frank was trying to tell us something important about what he's going through right now, and that we're all having a tough time staying with him because it's so painful. At least that's how I'm feeling, how about you guys?' June felt that might help, since he was verbalizing his own feelings. At least it would direct the conversation to what was going on at the moment. We speculated where it might go, how Alan could help Frank articulate more of his feelings, how this was affecting his start at the center, and what might be done to help.

There were only a few minutes left in the class and I wanted to do some summarizing. I thanked Alan for sharing the example. I asked him if he had any thoughts about how he might pick up on this. He discussed a few ideas about talking with Frank and the workers about the incident and trying to discuss with the other workers a strategy for dealing with Frank. I pointed out that we might differ on the issue of what the worker's function is, but that I doubted if we would differ on the influence that his or her sense of function has on his or her actions. I told the class that they knew my bias on the functional issue, and that as we examined other incidents — for example, those between parents and children, partners in marital counselling, patients and hospital staff, the individual and the group — I would point out how sense of function influences the work. Class members agreed that this would be helpful.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined one aspect of an approach to teaching the helping skills. The educational process is complex and the limits of space prevent exploring a number of other important issues such as those related to course structure, the use of readings, assignments, and so on. The aspect of the process discussed here was chosen because it is one of the most difficult and leased discussed areas.

A parallel chapter could have focused on the same issues using field instruction interviews. The parallel between teaching and the social work helping process is even more striking in this intensive, one-to-one relationship. My experiences incline me to the view that one of the best investments a school can make is in training and support programs for field instructors. All too often the focus of assistance is on administrative and structural issues, with little attention given to the development of the field instructor's interactional skills. Agency supervisors have a fund of experience to draw on. However, they are not always clear about the similarities and differences between teaching and social work. Some instructors use their experience to turn the field conference into therapy, while others avoid using their skills for fear of doing just that.

Workshops for field instructors that I have led have proven to be some of the most interesting aspects of my work. The focus has been on interaction between instructor and learner, using the phases of work as an outline. Field instructors have formed mutual aid groups, focusing on the skills of tuning in, contracting, and so on in the educational context. In this way, the instructors become familiar with the theoretical framework and models used in classroom teaching while receiving concrete help with their own skill development. A valuable tool has been the use of videotaped interviews between field instructor and student as illustrations of the teaching issues under discussion. Often the videotaped student was invited to sit in on the workshop, so that workshop members might have the advantage of directly inquiring about the student's feelings and thoughts, rather than guessing at them. This always proved to be helpful to both the workshop members and the student-field instructor pair.

I am certain that similar mutual aid workshops for faculty engaged in classroom teaching also would be of assistance. Colleagues can offer important support and insights to the instructor who continually attempts to sharpen his or her teaching skills. Just as students must struggle to create a culture for sharing their practice, mistakes and all, practice teachers need to deal with some of the barriers to tapping their colleague's potential. The shift in focus to method in our profession offers the possibility that curiosity about helping will extend to our own arenas of practice. We can then become, for our students, models of skilled helpers and continuing learners.

NOTES

1. Although this discussion is limited to classroom teaching, the principles put forth apply equally to field instruction.
2. For a discussion of this issue see William Schwartz, "Content and Process in the Educative Experience" (Doctoral diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1960).
3. For a detailed discussion of first classes see Lawrence Shulman, "The Dynamics of the First Class," *Learning and Development*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (September 1971).
4. In addition to process recordings, I have found audiotapes and videotapes to be extremely effective tools in developing teaching skills. Discussion of tapes of key classes with students or colleagues can provide important insights into the educational process while demonstrating that the instructor is a user of the learning-through-analysis technique.
5. For a discussion of group process in the classroom see Lawrence Shulman, "The Hidden Group in the Classroom," *Learning and Development*, Vol. 2 (November 1970).
6. Lawrence Shulman, "A Study of College Teaching Skills" (Doctoral diss., Temple University, 1973).
7. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SOCIAL WORKER BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Social workers work with many parents who have children living at home, in a foster home, or in a group home. Although the parents' specific situations may be different, meetings with their social workers often will include discussion of a number of concerns such as: your child, your child's home, your family, legal difficulties, medical matters, money problems, school, job, housing, or the agency. The specific situations and concerns may be different with each parent. When you fill out this form, these are the kinds of concerns we are referring to when we ask you to describe your social worker's behavior during your meetings together.

Please circle the number below each question that best describes your answer. Many of the questions describe a social worker's actions and ask you to indicate how often the social worker you dealt with acted in the way described. Try to answer based on your total experience with the worker rather than just your last meeting. We realize that some questions may make you think about other social workers you have worked with, but it is important that you only answer for the social worker mentioned in the letter.

Your answers will not be seen by your social worker or the agency. We will use a code number instead of your name. We encourage you to answer thoughtfully, keeping in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. We need your help so that we can understand how social workers can be more helpful.*

SAMPLE QUESTION

My worker helped me look at my concerns one at a time.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

Explanation: To answer this question, you would think of all of your meetings with the worker and try to remember how often he or she helped you take your concerns and discuss them one at a time. You can select one of five possible answers. You would circle 1 (often) if he or she did it all the time; 2 (fairly often) if he or she did it more than a few times, but not all the time; 3 (seldom) if he or she only did it a few times; 4 (never) if he or she never did it; or 5 (no answer) if you do not understand the question, or if the item does not apply to your situation.

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

We would like you to begin by thinking back to the first few meetings you had with this social worker (the one named in the letter). The following questions are about your first meetings.

1. In our first meetings my worker explained the kinds of concerns we might be discussing (for example: my child's difficult behavior).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
explained well	partly explained	didn't explain well	didn't explain	no answer

2. My worker explained how we would work together, describing the kind of help a social worker could give.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
explained well	partly explained	didn't explain well	didn't explain	no answer

---

*In the original questionnaire there were six additional items that stated the opposite of six of the listed skills. For example, one item stated: "There were times during our meetings when I felt that my worker didn't seem to understand what I was concerned about." This was an opposite statement to item 8: "When I told my worker how I felt, he or she understood." These items were included for use in the validity design with the observation system. They were not included in the calculations.

3. During our first meetings, my worker asked me for my ideas on the specific subjects we would discuss together (for example: job problems).

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

4. During our first meetings my worker told me he or she really believed I could get help from this agency with my concerns.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

We would now like you to think about what your meetings were like after the first ones. The following questions refer to these meetings.

5. My worker began our meetings by asking if anything had happened between meetings that I wanted to talk about.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

6. When I raised a general concern my worker asked me for examples (for example: If I said "Kids were hard to raise," she would say, "Did you have a difficult problem with your child this week?").

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

7. When I was unusually silent during our meetings, my worker tried to find out why.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

8. When I told my worker how I felt, he or she understood.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

9. My worker seemed to understand how I felt without my having to put it into words.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

10. My worker helped me see how my feelings affected how I acted (for example: If I felt lonely and unhappy, I would sometimes take it out on the kids).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

11. My worker let me know his or her feelings about the situations we discussed (for example: When he or she was happy or sad about something that happened).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

12. My worker shared many of his or her personal thoughts and feelings, which helped me get to know him or her better as a person.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

13. My worker believed I could handle the situations we discussed.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

14. My worker helped me look at my concerns one at a time.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

15. When I began to discuss a particular concern my worker kept me on the topic (for example: My child's difficulty at school).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

16. When I agreed with an idea too quickly, my worker asked me if I really meant it (for example: He or she would ask me if I had some doubts which were hard to express).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

17. When my worker thought I was not working hard in our discussions, he or she let me know.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

18. My worker helped me talk about subjects which were not easy to talk about (for example: loneliness, money problems, sex, etc.).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

19. My worker would point out when my feelings about something made it hard for me to talk during our meetings (for example: If I was upset about an agency decision it might make it hard for me to talk about other things).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

20. When I was upset about something my worker did or said, he or she encouraged me to talk about it.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

21. My worker shared his or her suggestions about the subjects we discussed for my consideration.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

22. My worker helped me to understand the behavior of other people in new ways (for example: husband, teacher, foster parent, children, etc.).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

23. When I had trouble talking to someone my worker would meet with them to make it easier for me to speak to them (for example: teacher, foster parent, husband, doctor, etc.).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
often	fairly often	seldom	never	no answer

Note: Only answer the next four items if you have already finished your last meeting with your worker. We would now like you to consider your last few sessions with your worker and to describe what these were like.

24. Sometime before our last meeting, my worker explained that our meetings would be ending soon.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

25. My worker let me know how he or she felt about our finishing.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

26. My worker asked me what I got out of our meetings together.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

27. My worker asked how I felt about ending our meetings.

	(2)	(3)		(5)
——	yes	no	——	no answer

B

RATER COVENTIONS AND RULES

To increase the reliability of rating it was necessary to identify some of the subtle distinctions between categories and to establish scoring conventions that would guide the raters. These distinctions assisted the raters in making judgments between categories that were similar. The rules set out a framework related to overall scoring and to specific patterns of behaviors.[1] These conventions are explained in the original research report.[2] The scoring rules are included in this Appendix.

SCORING RULES

1. *If the primary mode of the worker's behavior is judged to be in mode or out of mode, do not change to the opposite mode unless a clear indication of shift is given by the worker.* The rater makes

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[1] The system presented in Chapter Three was slightly modified from the one actually used in the subdesign. For example, sessional contracting was included in Category 1. These conventions are adapted to fit the new, modified system.

[2] Lawrence Shulman, *A Study of the Helping Process* (Vancouver, B.C.: School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1977).

use of his or her judgments in the tape preview to decide whether the worker is essentially "with" the client or working on his or her own agenda. The judgment about this general mode of operation (a 1-6 mode or a 7-9 mode) can change during an interview. However, during an in-mode or out-of-mode segment, the observer will be careful in his or her use of the opposite mode categories. This does not mean the observer will ignore momentary shifts to another mode, only that he or she will require clear evidence of such a shift.

The observer will preview the tape to identify general patterns of interaction. He or she must be clear that a general mode of interaction has been established in a segment before he or she will use the mode to influence his or her ratings. The rater also must be ready to change when the worker makes an obvious shift to a rare category — such as a move from a 7-9 mode to recontracting (Category 1). This procedure has been described by Flanders as the "rule of the unbiased observer."[3] The observer makes use of the general mode of interaction, in mode or out of mode, and although he or she will move to the opposite set of categories, he or she must feel a definite shift by the worker to the opposite type of influence before the change in pattern of interaction is granted.

2. *The observer will use the client's reaction to the interaction to aid in his or her judgment of the primary mode.* The rater's bias or the social worker's intentions should not be the central factor in determining in mode or out of mode interaction. Rather, the rater must ask if the client would feel that he or she was being criticized, and so on. The underlying notion is that it is not the intentions of the worker which help, but the client's response to the actual worker behavior.

3. *When in doubt, the observer will favor scoring a "rare" interaction, which includes Categories 1, 4, 6, and 8.* Because frequency of occurrence of these behaviors — even in the most theory-related work — will be relatively low, it is important that the rater include them when in doubt. Including them when not appropriate will not unreasonably bias the entire rating score, but excluding them when they do occur will have a powerful effect.

4. *If more than one category occurs during the three-second interval, then all categories used in that interval are recorded; therefore all changes in categories are recorded. If no change occurs within three seconds, repeat that category number.* This rule frees the observer to record, as best he or she can, exactly what he or she sees. If a single category continues for a while (e.g., a client talks uninterruptedly for a period of a few minutes), then by recording every three seconds a more accurate picture of the interaction will emerge.

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[3] N. A. Flanders and E. J. Amidon, *The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom* (Minneapolis: Association for Productive Teaching, 1967).

5. *If the worker remains silent while the client talks, record either 11 (individual work) or 13 (group/family work) for every clear, three-second interval.* The first entry would follow the first three-second period.

6. *Nonverbal encouragement of elaboration (such as nods) and verbal comments (such as "uh huh," "yes," "okay," etc.) would be scored by entering an 11-2 every time this set of interactions is observed.* This assumes that the worker's reaction is occasional and not simultaneous with the client's talking. In the case in which a worker continuously responds in this way (as in a habit) or is responding while the client is speaking (this pattern is determined during the preview), then the 11-2 scoring convention would not hold since it would seriously distort the percentages of category results.

7. *An opening pattern of work that involves "small talk," general chatter about apparently nonwork-related issues, would be scored as a 7-11 for every three seconds of continuation. Announcements about agency policy, for example, or other relevant information at the beginning of a session would be scored as Category 5. The traditional worker "review" of the previous week's discussion would be scored as Category 7.* A minor amount of small talk at the start of a session will not seriously affect the overall score. However, a long period without getting down to specific work would emerge as an out-of-mode behavior. The review of the previous week's work by the worker would be scored as a Category 7, since it does not take into account the client's activity between sessions.

8. *When a worker "echoes" a client's feelings as a general pattern of work, it should be scored as a Category 2 rather than a Category 3 (dealing with affect).* This rule allows the rater to distinguish between direct work with affect and a mechanical, almost ritualistic echoing response in which the worker does no more than simply repeat the client's words back to him or her (reflecting). Occasional reflecting in the context of work, done with feelings, would be scored as a Category 3. The rule only applies to the worker whose pattern of work clearly involves continued echoing.

RATER RELIABILITY

Through repeated joint viewings, scorings, and discussions of our results, it was possible after ten hours of training to achieve a high degree of interrater reliability. Each rater independently viewed the same videotape during a three-day period. The data were processed and the percentage of each category scored for the one-hour videotape was computed for each rater. The category percentage scores for each rater were compared with the other two and the difference for each category calculated. The sum of the total difference across all

TABLE B.1
Interrater Reliability Coefficients

	Rater A with Rater B		*Rater B with Rater C*		*Rater A with Rater C*	
	Reliability Coefficient	*Scott's Coefficient*	*Reliability Coefficient*	*Scott's Coefficient*	*Reliability Coefficient*	*Scott's Coefficient*
Videotape 1	88.8	83	83.3	75	83.4	75
Videotape 2	81.9	73	91.9	87	86.2	80

TABLE B.2
Test-Retest Reliability Coefficients

	Rater A		*Rater B*		*Rater C**	
	Reliability Coefficient	*Scott's Coefficient*	*Reliability Coefficient*	*Scott's Coefficient*	*Reliability Coefficient*	*Scott's Coefficient*
Comparison of first and second scoring of Videotape 2 by each rater	89.9	85	95	92.4	92.8	89

*Rater C was a staff member who had not received social work training.

11 categories was subtracted from 100 percent, yielding a reliability coefficient. This coefficient was then corrected for the fact that not all categories could be expected to be scored equally (i.e., since all client talk was entered as 11s). Scott's coefficient was used as a correction.[4] This procedure was repeated with two separate videotapes, two weeks in a row. Raters then were asked to score the second tape one week later (test-retest), and a comparison of the rater's record for each scoring of the same tape was computed for a stability-reliability figure. The results of the reliability studies are shown in Tables B.1 and B.2. These were judged to be high enough to begin the scoring of videotapes as part of the criterion-validity study of the *Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire.* Periodic retests of interrater reliability were implemented and regular meetings were held to discuss unanticipated events discovered on tapes. It is interesting to note that the rater, who had not received any social work training, still obtained high reliability scores.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS

Computer programs for analyzing data were developed by William Hillgartner of McGill University, who served as a consultant to the project. The programs are available in the full research report.[5] They were designed for use with an interactive terminal. Upon execution, these programs request a matrix label to be input by the terminal operator and then proceed to produce output that combines the interaction matrix and the category totals and percentages. Adaptation for noninteractive computing requires only slight modifications.

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[4] W. S. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 1955), pp. 321-25.

[5] Shulman, *op. cit.*

APPENDIX C

THE VIDEOTAPE PROGRAMS [illegible]

A series of videotape programs was produced by the author in connection with a three-year study of social work practice. The programs include an introduction to the theory that guided the research, with illustrations drawn from individual and group practice; a discussion of the research design and findings; a discussion of the research process; and the introduction of a Category Observation System for analyzing practice. All programs have been taped in color and are available through the Circulation Department, Instructional Communications Centre, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

1. *Social Work Theory and Practice*

Part I (52 minutes): William Schwartz of Columbia University outlines his mediation theory to a group of undergraduate students and professionals. Within the context of an "interactional" paradigm, he discusses systems theory, social work function, social work method, and the impact of the phases of work (tuning in, beginnings, work, and endings). The second half of the tape illustrates the theory in action as Professor Schwartz and the group analyze a process recording of groupwork practice presented by an undergraduate student.

Part II (38 minutes): The theory is further elaborated in the context of work with individuals, as a social work practitioner presents a first session with a "resistant" natural father who has placed his child with a child welfare agency. Professor Schwartz leads the group through a close analysis of the engagement process. The worker attempts to break through the client's apparent hostility and apathy to reach for the possible connections between his needs and the agency's service. Advanced-level skills of contracting, dealing with affect, and making a demand for work are discussed and illustrated in the session.

2. *Private Troubles and Public Issues*

(53 minutes): A group member's question to Professor Schwartz about the place of advocacy in his theory leads to a discussion of the social worker's role in agency and social policy change. Through discussion and role play, specific examples raised by the group members are used to develop Professor Schwartz's position. His central thesis is that the social worker must be simultaneously concerned with the specific problems of his or her clients *and* the general concerns of the group that his or her client represents. Professor Schwartz generalizes from a role-play example of work with a teacher into the problems and skills involved in working with system representatives (doctors, child care workers, etc.).

3. *A Research Project on Social Work Practice*

Part I (55 minutes): The author stresses both the need to operationalize what social workers actually do with clients and the need to test the relationship between patterns of practice behavior and outcome measures. The design of a three-year study of the practice of 118 social workers in two child welfare agencies is presented. Over two thousand natural parents, adolescents, adoptive parents, unwed mothers, and foster parents participated. The development of an instrument called the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire is described. The questionnaire lists 27 practice behaviors. It is completed by clients to provide their perceptions of their social worker's behaviors.

Part II (55 minutes): A student question on the accuracy of client perceptions opens a discussion of instrument reliability and validity. A number of procedures carried out in the first stage of the project are discussed to illustrate the concepts of reliability (stability and internal consistency) and validity (criterion, construct, face, and predictor). Some of the findings are shared in the form of a profile of the practice patterns of the average social worker in the study.

4. *Worker, Clients and Researchers: Their Reactions to a Research Project*

Part I (55 minutes): The author leads a discussion with participants in the research project. The group consists of a worker, her supervisor, and her client (an unwed mother); a second worker; a department head; and three members of the research project staff. The purpose of the discussion is to explore the way in which each participant reacted to his or her involvement in a sensitive research project. The engagement process is examined and resistance to the study (both overt and covert) is explored. The need for the researcher to look for "hidden negatives" is highlighted.

Part II (45 minutes): The discussion continues with a worker questioning the ability of some clients to use a worker's help or to evaluate the worker's practice. The concerns of workers about their own ability are discussed. Fears of agency administration misuse of the data in spite of guarantees of confidentiality are raised. A dialogue between a worker and her supervisor explores the possibilities of client feedback for continued learning.

5. *Social Work Practice Behavior in Two Child Welfare Agencies*

Part I (55 minutes): The author describes nine behavior groupings to an audience of social work students. The groupings include: contracting, elaborating client's concerns, empathic responses, the demand for work, providing data, dealing with systems, identifying obstacles to work, sharing worker feelings, and dealing with endings. Specific behaviors within each grouping are illustrated with excerpts from a videotaped interview with a foster adolescent.

Part II (52 minutes): A study is presented of the relationship between these behaviors and a number of outcome measures. Questionnaires designed to measure social work behavior and client satisfaction are described. Each behavior factor presented in Part I is briefly reviewed and illustrated. This is followed by an explanation of the data. The combinations of worker behaviors that most influence selected outcome measures is reported, including the weightings of each behavior. Interesting differences are highlighted between patterns of practice that appear to contribute to positive worker-client relationship, as compared with practice patterns that contribute to worker helpfulness.

6. *An Observation System for Analysis of Social Work Practice* (55 minutes): The author introduces a system that allows an observer to view a videotape of practice and to characterize the interaction observed by recording a number at least every three seconds. Practice behaviors are grouped into categories such as contracting, elaboration, empathy, and the demand for work. A split screen is used to demonstrate the process, using excerpts from actual practice tapes. A unique feature of this program is that program viewers are invited to join students in the studio in scoring a brief segment of videotape, providing a first-hand sense of the scoring process. The results of scoring a number of individual and group videotapes of practice are shared. Computer analysis of 120 hours of practice tapes containing over 99,500 observations is briefly discussed.

APPENDIX D

SOCIAL WORKER BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE: INDIVIDUAL ITEM ANALYSIS

This appendix provides further data on the reliability and validity analysis results for the Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire. The first two tables deal with the analysis of individual item scores comparing returns from the two administrations of the questionnaire (test-retest). The next three tables indicate the results of the analysis of variance comparisons of two individual items and the total questionnaire score (test-retest). Finally, the last two tables provide data from the comparison of worker self-scores with client scores on individual questionnaire items (criterion validity).

TABLE D.1
Item Analysis – Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire: Test-Retest – Mean and Standard Deviation (n=44)

Item	*Test*		*Retest*			*Non-Response*
	Mean	*S.D.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*n*[a]	*%*[b]
1. Clarifying Purpose	1.15	0.36	1.17	0.54	41	7
2. Clarifying Role	1.12	0.33	1.07	0.26	41	7
3. Encouraging Client's Feedback	2.05	0.22	2.05	0.22	40	9
4. Displaying Belief in Work	2.03	0.16	1.97	0.16	37	16
5. Between Session Data	1.64	0.88	1.67	0.88	42	4
6. General to the Specific	1.68	0.91	1.61	0.68	38	14
7. Reaching Inside of Silences	2.13	1.25	2.07	1.16	29	33
8. Understanding Client's Feelings	1.18	0.54	1.16	0.43	44	0
9. Verbalizing Client's Feelings	1.48	0.55	1.63	0.59	40	9
10. Connecting Feelings to Work	2.00	1.13	1.63	0.91	32	27
11. Displaying Feelings Openly	1.84	0.92	1.77	0.92	43	2
12. Sharing Thoughts and Feelings	2.09	0.29	2.09	0.29	43	2
13. Supporting Client's Strength	1.73	0.60	1.78	0.70	40	9
14. Partializing Client's Concerns	1.37	0.62	1.24	0.58	41	7
15. Holding to Focus	1.34	0.48	1.37	0.59	38	14
16. Checking Artificial Consensus	2.56	1.05	2.37	0.96	36	18
17. Pointing Out Illusion of Work	3.18	1.19	3.03	1.29	33	25
18. Supporting Client in Taboo Areas	1.90	0.94	1.63	0.73	41	7
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles	2.18	1.02	2.00	1.02	28	36
20. Dealing with Authority Theme	1.62	1.02	1.47	0.71	34	23
21. Providing Data	1.59	0.76	1.59	0.60	39	11
22. Viewing Systems People	1.89	0.75	1.88	0.76	36	18
23. Contacting Systems People	2.62	1.18	2.53	1.25	21	52
Totals	2.14	0.29	2.03	0.35	44	–

[a] Computations are based on those returns which included a valid response for the item on the test and retest.

[b] This percentage is the nonresponse on either test.

TABLE D.2
Item Analysis – Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire: Test-Retest – Correlations and Percent of Agreement (n=44)[a]

Item	*n*	*r*	*Percent Same*[b]	*Percent One*[c]	*Percent Two*[d]	*Percent Three*[e]
1. Clarifying Purpose	41	.13	83	15	–	2
2. Clarifying Role	41	.47	90	10	–	–
3. Encouraging Client's Feedback	40	-.05	90	10	–	–
4. Displaying Belief in Work	37	.02	95	5	–	–
5. Between Session Data	42	.67	64	31	5	–
6. General to the Specific	38	.41	47	42	3	8
7. Reaching Inside of Silences	29	.86	69	31	–	–
8. Understanding Client's Feelings	44	.48	84	14	2	–
9. Verbalizing Client's Feelings	40	.33	62	36	2	–
10. Connecting Feelings to Work	32	.75	69	19	12	–
11. Displaying Feelings Openly	43	.48	42	51	5	2
12. Sharing Thoughts and Feelings	43	.45	91	9	–	–
13. Supporting Client's Strength	40	.15	80	13	2	5
14. Partializing Client's Concerns	41	.17	71	24	3	2
15. Holding to Focus	38	.31	66	34	–	–
16. Checking Artificial Consensus	36	.73	50	50	–	–
17. Pointing Out Illusion of Work	33	.71	79	9	6	6
18. Supporting Client in Taboo Areas	41	.63	61	32	7	–
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles	28	.43	41	48	7	4
20. Dealing with Authority Theme	34	.26	59	26	9	6
21. Providing Data	39	.49	67	28	5	–
22. Viewing Systems People	36	.61	61	39	–	–
23. Contacting Systems People	21	.58	50	35	10	5
Totals	44	.75	–	–	–	–

[a] Computations based on returns including a valid response on both the test and retest.

[b] Same response on test and retest.

[c] One scale apart.

[d] Two scales apart.

[e] Three scales apart.

TABLE D.3
Item 10 – Connecting Feelings to Work: Analysis of Variance – Test and Retest Scores

Source of Variation	*SS*	*DF*	*Mean Square*
Between People	56.75	31	1.83
Within People	11.00	32	0.34
Between Measures	2.25	1	2.25
Residual	8.75	31	0.28
Total	67.75	63	1.07

Grand Mean = 1.81, Test Mean = 2.00, Retest Mean = 1.63, F = 7.97, Probability ≦ .008.

TABLE D.4
Item 18 – Supporting Client in Taboo Areas: Analysis of Variance – Test and Retest Scores

Source of Variation	*SS*	*DF*	*Mean Square*
Between People	46.09	40	1.15
Within People	12.50	41	0.31
Between Measures	1.48	1	1.48
Residual	11.02	40	0.28
Total	58.60	81	0.72

Grand Mean = 1.76, Test Mean = 1.90, Retest Mean = 1.63, F = 5.35, Probability ≦ .03.

TABLE D.5
Total Test Score (Average): Analysis of Variance – Test and Retest Scores

Source of Variation	*SS*	*DF*	*Mean Square*
Between People	7.74	43	0.18
Within People	1.43	44	0.03
Between Measures	0.26	1	0.26
Residual	1.16	43	0.03
Total	9.16	87	0.10

Grand Mean = 2.09, Test Mean = 2.14, Retest Mean = 2.03, F = 9.79, Probability ≦ .003.

TABLE D.6

Item Analysis – Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire: Worker/Client[a] Comparison – Mean and Standard Deviation (n=25)[b]

Item	*Worker*		*Clients*		
	Mean	*S.D.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*n*
1. Clarifying Purpose	1.96	.61	1.39	.33	25
2. Clarifying Role	1.88	.88	1.44	.40	25
3. Encouraging Client's Feedback	2.16	.38	2.15	.16	24
4. Displaying Belief in Work	2.24	.44	2.08	.21	17
5. Between Session Data	1.84	.69	1.80	.52	25
6. General to the Specific	1.62	.58	2.37	.83	24
7. Reaching Inside of Silences	1.82	.65	2.43	.87	23
8. Understanding Client's Feelings	1.71	.46	1.54	.38	24
9. Verbalizing Client's Feelings	2.05	.38	2.05	.53	22
10. Connecting Feelings to Work	1.87	.63	2.68	.84	23
11. Displaying Feelings Openly	1.61	.66	1.99	.52	23
12. Sharing Thoughts and Feelings	1.96	.74	2.19	.65	25
13. Supporting Client's Strength	1.82	.39	1.65	.32	17
14. Partializing Client's Concerns	1.82	.65	1.66	.43	23
15. Holding to Focus	1.96	.46	2.00	.58	24
16. Checking Artificial Consensus	2.30	.77	2.70	.64	23
17. Pointing Out Illusion of Work	2.57	.73	3.44	.47	23
18. Supporting Client in Taboo Areas	1.67	.57	2.34	.79	24
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles	2.19	.60	2.79	.71	21
20. Dealing with Authority Theme	1.71	.62	2.02	.59	24
21. Providing Data	1.66	.56	1.52	.46	24
22. Viewing Systems People	1.96	.46	2.47	.68	24
23. Contacting Systems People	2.18	.73	2.61	.83	22
Totals	2.08	.22	2.37	.27	25

[a] Client score was an average of the worker's respondents' scores on the item.

[b] Computations based on those returns that included a valid response by both the worker and his or her clients.

TABLE D.7

Item Analysis – Social Worker Behavior Questionnaire: Worker/Client Comparison – Percent of Agreement (n=25)

Item	*n*[a]	*Percent Same*[b]	*Percent 0.5*[c]	*Percent 1.0*[d]	*Percent 1.5*[e]	*Percent 2.0*[f]	*Percent 2.5*[g]	*Percent 3.0*[h]
1. Clarifying Purpose	25	16	44	32	4	4	–	–
2. Clarifying Role	25	20	48	20	4	8	–	–
3. Encouraging Client's Feedback	24	71	21	8	–	–	–	–
4. Displaying Belief in Work	17	59	18	23	–	–	–	–
5. Between Session Data	25	16	32	36	8	8	–	–
6. General to the Specific	24	13	29	29	17	–	4	8
7. Reaching Inside of Silences	23	17	17	35	13	18	–	–
8. Understanding Client's Feelings	24	4	63	33	–	–	–	–
9. Verbalizing Client's Feelings	22	41	36	23	–	–	–	–
10. Connecting Feelings to Work	23	13	22	30	13	17	4	–
11. Displaying Feelings Openly	23	35	22	26	17	–	–	–
12. Sharing Thoughts and Feelings	25	24	28	28	12	4	4	–
13. Supporting Client's Strength	17	35	47	18	–	–	–	–
14. Partializing Client's Concerns	23	22	52	18	5	4	–	–
15. Holding to Focus	24	25	50	25	–	–	–	–
16. Checking Artificial Consensus	23	26	39	22	–	5	4	4
17. Pointing Out Illusion of Work	23	26	17	22	22	13	–	–
18. Supporting Client in Taboo Areas	24	25	25	13	21	12	4	–
19. Identifying Affective Obstacles	21	10	29	28	19	14	–	–
20. Dealing with Authority Theme	24	8	38	46	4	4	–	–
21. Providing Data	24	54	29	17	–	–	–	–
22. Viewing Systems People	24	13	46	29	8	4	–	–
23. Contacting Systems People	22	9	32	14	18	23	–	4

[a] Computations based on cases with valid responses for both worker and clients.
[b] Same responses.
[c] Half scale apart.
[d] One scale apart.
[e] One-and-one-half scales apart.
[f] Two scales apart.
[g] Two-and-one-half scales apart.
[h] Three scales apart.

E

[illegible]

The following charts (Tables E.1-E.3) translate a number of propositions about human behavior into a testable format. The original propositions were drawn from transcripts of a series of taped lectures of William Schwartz and represent a portion of the knowledge base underlying his practice theory. The revisions were undertaken by two students, under the author's supervision.[1] The approach was the one suggested by Zetterberg in which each proposition is divided into determinant (predictor) and resultant (outcome) elements.[2] Each proposition represents a testable hypothesis that can be verified using existing research results or through new research. The ultimate goal is a theory of practice in which the underlying behavior theory and practice constructs are open to scientific verification.

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[1] See Mary A. Carbone and Jeff Jones, "The Helping Process: Development of Propositions about Reality," Research report submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, in partial fulfillment of the Master of Social Work Degree, Montreal, McGill University, 1974.

[2] H. A. Zetterberg, *On Theory and Verification in Sociology* (Toronto: The Bedminster Press, 1965).

TABLE E.1
Tuning-In Phase

Determinant	*Resultant*
1. People's memories	. . . effect people's expectations in new situations.
2. New situations	. . . cause people to respond more as they think others expect them to respond.
	. . . cause people to communicate more indirectly.
	. . . amplify and aggravate a number of ambivalent feelings in people: a. fear of inadequacy, b. fear of incompetency, c. fear of new demands, d. hope of satisfaction, e. hope of achievement, f. hope of recognition, and g. hope of realizing one's potential.
3. Fear of new demands	. . . aggravates feelings of dependency.
	. . . aggravates fear of authority.
4. Dependency on the worker	. . . results in the worker being idealized as an authority figure.
5. The more complex the task of the client	. . . the greater the ambivalence of the client toward work on the task.

TABLE E.2
Beginning Phase

Determinant	*Resultant*
1. If a client has needs related to agency services	. . . the client will reach out to use the agency services.
2. If an agency has services to offer a client	. . . the agency's representatives will reach out to offer the services.
3. The client-agency engagement	. . . creates demands and expectations of the agency and the client on each other.
4. Demands and expectations by the agency and the client on each other	. . . result in worker and client behaviors.
5. The greater the diversity of an individual's concerns	. . . the more complex the system of demands and expectations between the agency and the client.
6. Direct statements of demands and expectations by the worker and the client	. . . are experienced by both as taboo and embarrassing. . . . limit the demands and expectations of each on each other.
7. Indirect statements of demands and expectations by the worker and the client	. . result in hidden agendas.

TABLE E.2 (continued)
Beginning Phase

Determinant	*Resultant*
8. Indirect statements of demands and expectations by the worker	. . . result in client's prolonged period of testing.
	. . . result in client's ambiguity about the purpose of the engagement.
	. . . result in client's indirect communication about his or her concerns.
	. . . result in client's difficulty in choosing the appropriate responses.
9. Ambiguous statements of purpose by the worker	. . . result in the client's fear and anxiety about the agency's power.
	. . . result in the client's fear and anxiety about the nature of the agency's demands and expectations.
10. In an initial small group encounter, consensus on group purpose	. . . creates fear of new demands and unfamiliar conditions.
	. . . creates hope for positive outcomes.

TABLE E.3
Ending and Transition Phase

Determinant	*Resultant*
1. The idea of ending the client-agency engagement	. . . produces ambivalent feelings in both the worker and the client that would include the following: a. resistance to ending, b. feelings of guilt about their incompetency and inadequacy, c. a sense of unfinished business between the worker and the client, d. client's speculation about the future, e. client's sense of accomplishment, and f. client's urge to use and stretch one's newly found skills in life situations.
2. The more guilt the worker feels about his or her inadequacy and incompetency in the client-agency engagement	. . . the more responsibility the worker feels about the outcome of the client-agency engagement.
3. The more guilt the client feels about his or her inadequacy and incompetency in the client-agency engagement	. . . the more dependent he or she will be on the worker.
4. The client's feelings of dependency on the worker	. . . result in the client's idealization of the worker as an authority figure.

TABLE E.3 (continued)
Ending and Transition Phase

Determinant	*Resultant*
5. The client's idealization of the worker as an authority figure	. . . results in the client feeling more dependent on the worker.
6. The more sudden and precipitous the ending	. . . the more difficult it is for the client to deal with it openly and honestly.
7. As the client-worker engagement approaches the end	. . . the client and the worker respond with the following feelings and actions: a. evasive reactions concerning the very existence of endings, b. expressions of anger (both overt and covert), c. attempts to face separation openly, d. attempts to go through a mourning period, e. the client finally develops the ability to confront the idea of ending directly, f. the client rejects the worker in subtle ways, and g. the client attempts to avoid work.